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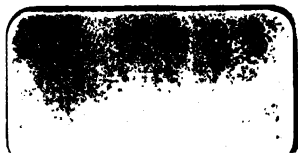
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BOUND TO PLEASE.

BY

HENRY SPICER,

AUTHOR OF "OLD STYLES'S;" "SIGHTS AND SOUNDS;" "A WHITE HAND AND
A BLACK THUMB;" ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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DRAWING A BADGER.

QUORDER to sail at eight for Messina, in the *Kertsch*, with stores," growled Frank Wilcox, with whom I was dining at the club at Malta. He flung the missive across to me with unmitigated disgust.

" 'England exp——' "

"Bosh!" returned Lieutenant Wilcox. "In my humble opinion, England never knew how much she did expect, till Nelson told her. In revenge, she sets no bounds to her anticipations. The *Terrible* must be precious hard up in the matter of holystones, if I'm only allowed two hours' notice. Duty's duty, but, dash my buttons! let us *dine*! Waiter, bring the wind."

The waiter executed this weird office by presenting the hourly weather-card, adding, as he did so,

"Dead calm, sir, since five."

"They'll have to tow us well out. I shouldn't wonder if the admiral escorted us in person," said Frank. "This *Kertsch*—confound the old tub!—is

his peculiar darling. Hang it, George, we must postpone the chess, unless—eh—ha—*unless*, I say—— But no, of course you wouldn't——”

“Wouldn't what?”

“Go with me, you know! Ha—ha—ha!”

“With the greatest pleasure.”

“Nonsense, old boy!”

He extended his honest hand. I returned the pressure.

My preparations were soon complete, and I was on board the *Kertsch*, in harbour, at a quarter before eight. She was a schooner, of little more than a hundred tons. She had been built at Valetta for a gunboat during the Crimean war, with a twin-sister, now the admiral's yacht; but, fortunately for our enemies, was not completed in time to take part in the struggle. Perhaps this had preyed upon her spirits, and induced that premature old age which seemed to affect every plank, beam, and rope about her. She was the most dejected-looking craft I ever saw, and sat so heavily on the water, that it appeared as if nothing short of a tornado would waken her from her stupor, or even set her in motion at all. Although she was already down nearly to the gunwale with stores of a ponderous character, others were still heaving in-board—the miserable *Kertsch* receiving each new consignment with a low hollow growl, like that of an over-loaded camel.

“Holystones—ah? Well, pitch in another ton or two while you're at it. Pig-ballast—*all* right. Stow away, my hearties! Hallo!—what next? An iron church. Heave in—heave in!”

Finally, just as we were about to cast off, a mighty anchor, weighing several tons, was placed upon our tiny deck, making locomotion all but impossible ; and now the tug-boat—rightly judging that we must either sink or sail—came puffing down and took us in tow.

As Frank had anticipated, the excellent port admiral did abandon his claret, and came sweeping out in his barge, to see his favourite depart. The secret of his interest in her was supposed to be a long-standing difference of opinion between himself and the admiral of the station (who, as I have mentioned, used the twin-vessel as his yacht) as to the sea-going qualities of their respective tubs.

Sir Charles greeted Frank kindly, and, having pulled twice completely round us, as if fascinated, bore down, and hung upon our quarter, much as a loving parent might cling to some spoiled darling on the point of quitting home. He was, however, in excellent spirits, and, rubbing his hands, as he glanced round the hazy horizon and the motionless sea, declared his opinion that we should have a “snorer” before morning.

“If we *do*, Sir Charles,” said Frank, laughing as he stooped over the sunken bulwark, with his nose nearly in the water, “you will have to report to my lords the decease of Her Majesty’s schooner *Kertsch*, under circumstances which might have embarrassed a seventy-four !”

“Don’t tell *me*, Wilcox !” exclaimed the admiral ; “a better sea-boat never swam. Now I just want to see what she *can* do, and that’s why I’ve popped you in her for this little trip——”

"Thank you," said Frank, *sotto voce*.

"—Knowing how you boys crack on when once you've got out of signal distance. Well, I'll be off in a minute. Pret-ty lines indeed the thing has! You'll return, of course, the moment you've transhipped these matters, and bring us word what Garibaldi's doing. Good night, gentlemen." And the veteran's white locks gleamed in the twilight as he waved us a wistful adieu.

We were now about a mile and a half outside the harbour. The tug had abandoned us to our own devices, but there was still a dead calm, and we swung helplessly round, heading for the port. "Pipe away the gig," said Frank, "and get her nose round. We may as well *look* the right course."

"Very good, sir," said the quartermaster—a grizzled old sea-dog named Jacobs—"but 'tain't no use. She hasn't no more steerage-way than a house. No more she *won't* have. I remember, once, in the old *Badg*——"

"Lower the gig!" said Frank, sharply. And the *Kertsch's* head was pulled round. "I warn you against that ancient mariner," continued Frank. "The old croaker! He has the most appalling catalogue of sea-horrors! Most of them occurred while he was serving in what he calls the 'old *Badger* brig.' Beware of the *Badger*."

There was, however, something in the old seaman's face that inclined me to cultivate his acquaintance, and presently, as he stood patiently by his hopeless wheel, Frank having dived below, I laid a snare for the *Badger*.

"Well, Jacobs, dull work! Have you known these calms last many hours?"

"Hours? Weeks, sir—months! I remember—'twas in th' old *Badger* brig—cruising we wos a'ter pirates in the Chainey seas, the sun he went down streaky, as 'twas to-day. Says I to Bill Dummage, says I, 'Bill, mark me. We're done,' I says. '*Done!*' says Bill, answering. 'Wheerby?' 'Tell ye what, now,' says I, 'I'll swop my 'lowance o' grog 'gin yourn o' water, day for day, for twenty-seven days, from next Monday.' 'Done with *you*, mate,' were Bill's reply. We lays for thirty,three days on half a pint o' water, washin' and all, till——"

"Set your gaff-topsail!" shouted Frank, putting up his head. "Breeze coming."

The gaff-topsail opened its brown bosom, but could not succeed in alluring the infant zephyr, which, after indulging in a few fitful gyrations, flickered out again altogether. The excellent admiral would have been disgusted to find his "snorer" fall so far short of his anticipations. That night afforded us several hours of undisturbed chess. The sea-air must have invigorated my game. I found myself playing with an "élan," which electrified the skipper Frank.

I was on deck at daybreak. We had drifted a little during the night, and there was even—as Jacobs bade me remark—a little "drain" of wind, for the harbour was seven or eight miles distant. We were still moving, but, as some potato-skins, flung overboard in the watches of the night, were sailing in company, and even occasionally forging ahead, it may be safely inferred that the pace was not killing. After break-

fast affairs improved—light breeze on our quarter—going about four knots for several hours; in fact, until we sighted Cape Passaro, the most southern point of Sicily, when again it fell calm.

“To-morrow, sir,” said old Jacobs, “you’ll have just so much wind as you can’t stagger under.”

Oracles are not to be interpreted literally. I believed in the breeze; for the staggering, Westminster Abbey seemed as likely to become the puppet of the winds as the unimpressive *Kertsch*.

I asked Jacobs on what he grounded his opinion, the barometer being steady.

Mr. Jacobs suggested that the barometer should be “blowed,” adding:

“Wot’s glass? Wot’s quicksilver? Give me natur. When you notices them divers a peckin’ at each other’s game, instead of each fishin’ steady for hisself, there’s a hirritation in the hair that ses ‘squall’s a coming.’ Harky here. One day—’twas in the old *Badger* brig—we wos layin’ becalmed, as might be now, when whish! there come a whole flock o’ these birds, whirrying and screeching about the ship. They was hardly gone, when down come such a squall as I never see in my life afore. ‘Crack!’ went the main-topmast. Away went everything. Captain he was on deck in a moment. ‘Why, where’s the stick?’ he sings out, looking wildly about. ‘I heerd the topmast go.’ Sir, it *was* gone! There warn’t a rag, nor yet a splinter to be seen! Squall had taken it away, as if it warn’t no more than one of them invisibile bonnets ladies wears, and nobody never sot eyes on that beautiful stick no more.”

"The *Badger* seems to have had her full share of bad luck."

"Well, first and last she mought. She was wrecked twice, but got off. Twice a-fire, scuttled for to save her—all right. Once, keg o' powder took fire, and blew cap'en's cabin out o' windy. Once she went down at her moorings—Lords o' th' Admiralty telegraphed for to know *why*?—carpenters warn't conjurors—couldn't tell. She was weighed again in a jiffey. Men was as sweet as nuts upon the old *Badger* brig."

"Sweet upon her! The deuce they were! And why?"

"'Twas this way. They thought that, happen what mought, she *couldn't* be cast away. *Was*, though. Went down in a fog in the Baltic—not a hand saved, 'cept a monkey and the cook."

Jacobs's prophecy was destined to be so far fulfilled, that a stiffish breeze from the south-east carried us fairly under the shadow of Etna, distant twenty miles, when it once again fell calm, and left us heaving on the glassy swell; the sound of heavy guns from the northward increasing our impatience to learn what was going forward. As it afterwards turned out, it was precisely at this time—eleven o'clock, on the twenty-first July, 'sixty—that Garibaldi fought his desperate action at Milazzo. The distance—from fifty to sixty miles in a direct line—precluded the possibility of the sounds proceeding from thence. True, the cannonade at the second battle of Manassas, in the present American war, was, distinctly heard at a distance of *fifty-six* miles; but that was, in weight of metal and rapidity of action, the most tremendous

cannon conflict of modern times. The guns we heard were, probably, from the citadel of Messina, still held by a Bourbon garrison.

I was lying half asleep on deck, in the shadow of the sail—Frank improving his mind with a French novel below—when some excited talking among the men forward, followed by a loud laugh, aroused my attention. The conversation appeared to have reference to some object in the water, which had disappeared, before I looked up, with a plunge, the traces of which were still plainly visible. Old Jacobs came growling aft.

"'Twarn't no good telling o' *them*. I never met with no chap as 'ood believe it, yet."

"What's the matter, Jacobs?"

"Thought they sis a serpint," replied that gentleman, shortly.

"Serpent? Sea-serpent?"

"Well, 'twarn't a wiper," retorted Mr. Jacobs, still evidently ruffled; "leastways I should *say* not. He 'oodn't hardly strike out so far, afore breakfast. But, now-a-days, a man mustn't trust his own heyes."

"Tell me now, Jacobs, do *you* believe in the sea-serpent?"

"Yes, I do, sir, *if* seein's believin'," added Mr. Jacobs, cautiously. "'Tain't always, now-a-days."

"He has been considered a doubtful monster."

"I'm aweer he have, sir. 'Tis drift-weed, wreck, a line o' porpuses, anything but what 'tis, and what we *ses* 'tis. Do you think a sailor don't know a porpus? Blow the serpint! 'Tain't nothing to hus. Why should we go fur to tell a passel o' lies about

it? I knowed the old captain at Nahant, has watched him four hours from the beach, with half the parish at his heels, but he's been so chaffed about it since, by them as warn't there, that he cuts up rough, and wouldn't talk of the serpint, even to *me*."

I told Jacobs that, some few years ago, while at the Zoological Gardens, I happened to notice a jolly tar standing before one of the dens—apparently in close conversation with a black tiger-cat. The beast really seemed to know him—stretching out its paw as far as it would go, and rubbing its head sideways against the bars, in the fondling manner of a cat. I observed to the man that the animal appeared to recognise him.

"He do, sir," was the reply. "'Tis a messmate. We was together for a long spell in the *Dædalus*—just paid off—Captain McQuhae."

"The *Dædalus*! Then you were perhaps one of those who saw the sea-serpent?"

"Yes, sir, I was. I was in the watch on deck when he hove in sight. He kep' company with us near upon an hour, and once come within a cable's length of the ship. Captain, he turned out and saw him too, and logged it all down. There was only one thing wrong in the description that was in the papers. He hadn't no mane. There was some weed washing about his head and neck, as if he'd been a-grubbing at the bottom. 'Twas that, perhaps, made them think 'twas wreck coated with sea-drift. However, wreck don't make seven knots an hour, and that's what we was both running, all the time, sometimes the serpint forging ahead, sometimes us."

Mr. Jacobs was reassured by this anecdote, and forthwith weighed anchor, with his favourite, in chase. For the sake of clearness, I interpret his singular statement into the landsman's tongue. Sinking his voice to that confidential key which even the truthful use in speaking of things not likely at once to command belief, thus Mr. Jacobs :—

“Thirty year ago, sir—’twas when I sailed in the old *Badger* brig—I come across a strange creature of the kind we was speaking of. We was homeward bound, had had a fair run from the Cape, and was within two days’ sail of St. Helena, when it fell calm, with the queerest weather I ever see. As far as our glasses could reach there were thick clumps of yellow fog moving about, separated from each other, as if they was giants dancing a minnywet. Now and again one of these would come drifting and sweeping down upon us, when, for five minutes or so, you couldn’t see the man at the wheel; and, after it was passed, leaving a hot p’isonous scent, such as I’ve had many a whiff of, while out with boats in the rivers in Afrikey, near nightfall. The men used to say ’twas the beasts—snakes, monkeys, tigers, and what not—coming out to feed.

“I was below, getting my breakfast, and all was very drowsy and quiet in the ship, when I heerd the voice of Mr. Commersal—Leftenant Commersal—hailing the look-out aloft—

“‘What do you make of it, Marshall?’

“I could not hear the answer. Mr. Commersal hailed again—

“‘Take a squint through my glass. Up there

with it, boy. Steady now, Marshall; when he rises on the swell.'

"There was silence for a good minute, then something from Marshall I couldn't hear, after which the lieutenant himself came below and tapped at the captain's door.

" 'Halloa !'

" 'It is I, sir—Mr. Commersal. There's a breeze coming—nor'-nor'-west.'

" 'Well, sir, make all sail.'

" 'I beg your pardon, Captain Willis, but—but—there's a hextrornary appearance on our weather-quarter. Shall we bear up presently and examine it ?'

" 'What is it like, sir ?'

" 'Well, if there were sea-serpents, Captain Willis, I should say there was about the biggest of the breed hove to little more than a mile from us, on the weather-quarter.'

" 'Commersal ! do you think I'm going to lose an hour or two beating to windward in chase of an overgrown conger ?'

" 'Very well, sir.' Mr. Commersal turned to go on deck, but suddenly stopped, came back, and knocked again.

" 'I beg your pardon, sir, but would you do me the favour to take one look at this fellow before we run him out of sight ?'

" 'Certainly, Commersal, if you wish it,' growled the captain. And turning out, he was on deck in a minute. I gulped down my cocoa, and followed.

"The breeze had died away again, and the watch

on deck were clustered on the weather-bow, all with their eyes fixed upon something that was now slowly creeping across our bows, and just entering one of the masses of fog I spoke of. I was only in time to see a bit of him, but *that* and the wake the beggar left—dash my grandmother's cat's tail!" ejaculated Mr. Jacobs, breaking down suddenly, as if the language of description failed. Presently he resumed—

"'Pass the word for Bill Distance,' were the first thing I heard on deck.

"Which Bill had a wonderful eye, and could tell you almost to a fathom, how far you was from any large object. Bill's way was to stuff his cheek with baccy till it was as tight packed as a middy's first kit, put his hands into his waistband, stick his noddle on one side, like a jackdaw squinting into a marrow-bone, and make some sort of calkylation which he couldn't explain, and which nobody couldn't learn. It seemed to have something to do with the bobstay, as that was the only other thing Bill ever looked at while doing the sum. Howsever, it always ended in Bill's slapping his thigh, and singing out such and such a number, as if he'd suddenly guessed a riddle, or found out the meaning of a joke. And, queer as it seems, Bill was always within a few feet of the mark. We consequently called him Bill Distance.

"Being ordered by the captain to put on his considering cap, and report how far ahead the serpint lay, Bill went through his usual tactics (this time with the help of the lieutenant's glass, for, as I said, the beast had run into the fog), consulted with his friend

the bobstay, and finally declared that 'twas half a mile, less nine fathom, going large.

" 'Coming about, I think,' says the skipper, with his eye at the glass, and looking, as I thought, rather puzzled. 'Hang me if I don't think he'll speak us !'

"Just at that instant the mist closed completely over him, and came lowering down in the direction of the brig, seemingly bringing the serpint with it. Leastwise, if he'd held his course, he must have passed out again into the clear. Which he didn't.

"By this time every soul on board was on deck, and the crew was almost as excited as if they had been going into action. 'Twas no wonder, for Bill had told them something he didn't like to tell the captain—firstly, because he warn't asked to it; in the second place, because he mought have been popped into the black-list for romancing—namely, that the serpint, according to the best calkylations of Bill and the bobstay, was *four hundred and seventy feet long*, and as broad across the lines as Plymouth Break-water !

"As the fog-bank come drifting down upon us, the captain beckoned to Mr. Commersal, who was on the rattlins trying to get a clearer view. They talked together for a moment, then there was an order to run in and double shot the two bow guns. Which was done in the twinkling of a bedpost, Mr. Commersal standing by to pint one of them himself. After that, there was a moment of the deadest silence I ever heerd on shipboard. We hadu't beat to quarters, so the men had nothing for to ockipy their attention, but some danger they couldn't understand.

They was quiet enough now. The whole ship's company looked as if they was bewitched, and couldn't move tongue nor hand. Such a rum expression I never see on any men's faces yet, and hope I shan't again. 'Twarn't fear, bless you! *you* knows the sailor too well for *that*. 'Twas—— Well, p'raps if I'd a had a gen'leman's education, I mought have been able to explain better what it was that made us all look as if we was going to be strung up at the yard-arm at a moment's notice, and without one tussle for our lives. I've been in seventeen actions, big and little, sir," continued old Jacobs, "and I can't say as I ever was afraid, but from that long moment ('twarn't hardly *more*) aboard th' old *Badger* brig, *I learned what a coward feels*, and I've never scoffed at them poor devils since.

" 'If 'twarn't fear,' ses you, 'what *were* it?'

" Which were nat'ral words for any gen'leman to utter. 'Tis just what none of us Badgers—from Captain Willis down to the boy—couldn't answer. Harky here. Our hands was listless as so much flax. If the captain his very self had said, 'Stand by, Jacobs, my man, here's Queen Wictoria in a glass o' grog,' I couldn't have lifted a finger towards it! Our knees was somewheres in our shoes, our eyes was a smarting and blinking, and our tongues was as parched as if we hadn't had a drink for a fortnight. 'Twas just as though the whole ship's company had been suddenly p'isoned—Captain Willis he said something, a'terwards, about its being whiskers* fluid—however,

* "Viscous." (?)

none of us didn't find any particular difference in *them*, though Bob Jessamy, who was nursing a kiss curl, thought it hung limperer than what it usually did do.

"O' course it got darker as the bank began to close us, and every second the thing, whatever it mought have been, that made us look like mummies that had died of spotted fever, got worser and worser. 'Twas a sweetish kind of smell, and yet bilge-water was vi'lets alongside of it! Some of the men—old hands, too, they were—turned deadly sick, dropping all in a lump like, on the deck. There was no mistake now. *'Twas the smell of the monstrous snake that was beering down upon us*—p'raps without knowing—for the mist was so thick you mought as well have tried to see through the mainsail.

"The captain he'd got hold of the lanyard of the port gun, and stud there just as steady as a rock, but I caught sight of his face as the fog began to come aboard, and 'twas just as queer and white as any of ourn, while his eyes was as wide open as they would go, glaring into the coming darkness. He was trying to speak, too, without turning his head, but it seemed as if he was half suffocated. I think he was a-telling Mr. Commersal :

" ' Wh—when he opens f—f—*fire* ! ' "

"The words warn't out of his mouth, when there come a sound, from just ahead, as if a clap of thunder had burst through from t'other side of the world! The mist closed in like a curtain, but in the very heart of it, something green and shiny, like a line of low coast, only at one point heaved as high as our cross-trees, was plain to be seen rolling down upon us!

'Bang, bang!' went the two guns, almost like one. Then down went the old brig, head first, downder than I ever knowed as a ship could go that was meant to come up again. What with the noise, the darkness, the rush of water, I almost lost my senses; but I kept a grip of what was nearest, and 'twas well I did, for as the brig righted, a sea broke over us that swept the deck clear of everything loose, and left three feet of water in the hold. For a minute after that, th' old *Badger* danced and staggered like a tipsy bear. Then it got calm again, the fog lifted, out come the sun. There was nothing hextrornary to be seen or heerd except (as some said) another thunder-roar a long ways off. The men were picking themselves up, rubbing their eyes as if they had a snooze, and asking each other what had happened.

"The captain he was a standing by his gun, with his face in his hat. Presently, he tuk it out, spoke aside to Lieutenant Commersal, and walked aft. Next minute the ship's company was piped to hear a speech. Captain said, 'Harkyhere, my lads, less we talk of this here business ashore, the better. They 'ont believe us, they 'ont; and if so be they did, 'tan't for the credit of the old *Badger* that she was amost swallowed by a snake! Purfessor Pausitive says there ain't no sea-snakes. Three cheers for the purfessor, and I wish he weer aboard! Steward, double the men's grog till we make St. Helena. Clerk, the log.' The clerk took fever on the passage home, and I did his duty. That's how I come to read the captain's account of our adventur, made smooth and reg'lar for the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty,

and 'twas thus : 'September tenth, eighteen 'thirty-five, lat. —, long. —, calm, with fog-banks.—Saw a curious marine animal (having some characteristics of the serpent) of considerable size. On our near approach, the animal sounded. Endeavoured to obtain the specimen ; but, not wishing to delay the voyage, proceeded.' ”

So far, Mr. Jacobs. A few hours after this narration, a favourable breeze determined my friend to put into Catania : at which port, not without reluctance, I abandoned the little *Kertsch*, and took to the land.





ABOARD THE "EVELEEN BROWN."

I THINK it was in the summer of eighteen hundred and thirty-seven that I became possessor of the cutter yacht *Barberina*, of Southampton. A liberal measurement of the craft would have fixed her burden at something more than three-quarters of a ton, while her price was ten pounds and a row with the outgoing proprietor—who, with a stinginess more befitting one of his natural profession (a lollipop merchant) than a true son of the sea, sought to eliminate the mainsail from our bargain, as if that article were a superfluous "store," which might, or might not, be occasionally required.

Moderate as these terms may appear, I am disposed to think that the proprietor aforesaid (who had christened his yacht after an animated sweetmeat that played about the shop, and had always treacherous fingers) took advantage of my innocence in nautical matters to the extent of several pounds.

I cannot say that he lavished many praises upon his craft. I was simply won by a manner he had of put-

ting his head on one side, and remarking that she sat "like a duck" upon the water. According to his report, she not only sat, but rode, turned, and even stood up, on the same model. I had never especially noticed a duck's seat. If that fowl, when sedentary, rests upon its base, so, certainly, did the *Barberina*. Unless, however, water percolates freely through every pore of a duck's frame—unless a duck, when tacking, invariably misses stays—unless a duck, when swimming, creates a disturbance in the ocean not inferior to that of a powerful tug, but without the accompanying progress, there (with the seat) all resemblance ends.

These little peculiarities revealed themselves to my after observation. Meanwhile, my first act, after forwarding my yacht to the metropolis, and thence to Brighton, by the goods train, was to endeavour to effect a change of name. Why upon earth should I call my yacht *Barberina*, and lay myself open to the suspicion of being attached to some mysterious nymph bearing that hideous appellation? I never could fully understand the difficulty I encountered in that matter. Whether the maritime authorities who inspected my ship's "papers" had an especial relish for the name of *Barberina*, or whether they anticipated some serious danger to the Customs department in the proposed alteration, at all events the trouble it cost me to transform *Barberina* into—well, into *Eveleen Brown*—is almost inconceivable.

I confided my vessel to the care of a gentleman whose name, if the pronunciation of his beach-faring brethren could be trusted, was Jarspur. The boatmen

of Brighton are a remarkable and distinctive race of men. A generation having passed away since the period of which I write, I trust I shall not be wounding any individual susceptibilities if I dwell for a moment on their singular characteristics.

The Brighton boatman whose type I would present, has generally served seventeen months, neither more nor less, in the Royal navy. How and why he entered, under what circumstances quitted, and what exploits he performed in that service, are, together with the precise name of his ship, points enveloped in mystery. He has a wife and nine small children, who never grow any bigger, possibly from the insufficient nutriment obtained from skate, winkles, and starfish, on which, if the family father is to be believed, they principally subsist. He has neither baptismal nor family name, in proof of which rather startling fact, I may mention that my five most intimate friends were known respectively as "Tim," "Jarspur," "The Shepherd," "Streaky," and "Bubs," all titles conferred on them by their fraternity. I had entertained some doubts on the subject of Bubs, till reassured by that gentleman's emphatic declaration that it "*warn't* his name, leastways, not as he know'd on," though he never answered to any other.

I took some pains to discover the secret principle which governed beach nomenclature. All, however, that I could ascertain was, that Tim was so called because he had espoused a Mrs. Juniper; the Shepherd, for so much as, many years ago, a gentleman had presented him with an aged vest of the plaid bearing that pastoral name; and Streaky, seeing that he had

beguiled a part of his seventeen months' naval service by tattooing himself, like a savage, from head to foot. "Jarspur" and "Bubs" being pure fancy names, defied investigation.

The Brighton boatman has two especial forms of invitation.

The fair weather: "Take a retch (reach) off, sir? Fine breeze." An unconscious warning, which must have recurred with painful distinctness to many a pallid citizen, receding from the steadfast shore.

The foul weather: "Seen that 'ere curious fish what our boats brought in o' Toosday, sir? Tuppence."

Boats—in the plural—to suggest the idea of *one* having proved inadequate to the towage of the struggling monster ashore. The animal—need I add?—turns out to be a dogfish, some twenty-four inches in length, and about as interesting to coast frequenters as a whiting.

The Brighton boatman is never known to beg; for, although mendicancy is with him a confirmed habit, it is simply argumentative, based, as it were, completely on hypothesis.

"S'posen' any gel'man would give me two shillen towards a new mainsle, I'd do a good job among they mackarel-boats next year, sir."

"Happen some gel'man 'ood rise 'alf-a-crown, I'd——" &c., &c.

It is difficult to resist a perpetual suggestion. Hence, it was only when I discovered that "rising" half-a-crown meant, in reality, sinking that amount in the hopeless slough of Mr. Bubs' pocket, that I finally hardened into stone.

Perhaps, however, the most extraordinary feature in the history of this singular tribe, is the existence among them of a—of an—I am at a loss what to call it—a mysterious impersonality, a shadowy power, an influence felt—and felt severely—yet never seen, and distinguished by the familiar title of "My Pardner." The professional interests of Brighton boatmen, like those of all rivals in trade, are *primâ facie* opposed to each other. The office of My Pardner seems to be to reconcile these, so far at least as is requisite to form a powerful league and combination against the general public.

By way of illustration, let us imagine Streaky, while touting on the promenade, having beguiled a couple of City gentlemen into undertaking a voyage to the remote haven of Shoreham, and back to that of Bedford-square. These unfortunate persons are forthwith conveyed on board a vessel with a bottom as flat as a card-table, displaying, though still upon the strand, a perfect cloud of canvas, likewise a board intimating that the *Swallow* sails every day, not absolutely tempestuous, at "half-past eleven o'clock in the forenoon," as though it were necessary to guard against the probability of some holiday lounge applying for a cruise at midnight.

There must surely be some neglect in striking this vessel's bell, for it is now past one o'clock, she is still in full sail on the beach, and our two enterprising navigators, her sole tenants, are beginning to evince signs of dissatisfaction. Streaky, touting off and on in short tacks, has his eye upon them, however, and having, by a sudden stroke of fortune, captured three

more prisoners all in a lump, conducts them on board; but, to the astonishment of the whole party, himself modestly retires.

Some misgiving apparently visits the mind of one of the City gentlemen.

"Heh! Halloo! Ain't this *your* boat, my man?"

"Well, sir, 'tis Tim's Pardner's," is the reply.

"*My* boat's out, which a lady and two young gents is a rowing to Kemp Town. *Off* she goes! Yea-ho!"

And Streaky, aided by two brown-faced giants, who have apparently shot up from the shingle, and a small young lady in frilled trousers, with a spade in one hand and a cake in the other, sets his back against the wall-sided *Swallow* and edges her into the wave. The brown-faced men jump on board, and off she does go. But on her return with her pale freight, Streaky is found on the beach, so manifestly expectant of a shilling, that the demoralized beings he assists to land will change a sovereign to give it him!

The result is identical if, on the next occasion, the visitor pointedly demands Streaky's own boat for a row. In accordance with the universal rule, Streaky exhibits the most marked reluctance to enter the craft supposed to be his own; but at length, and on protest, does so, accompanied by a mysterious individual who not two seconds before was invisible. This person uses his oar with a careless professional air; but never utters a sound, saving once, when, at a jocular remark from one of the company, he gives vent to a sort of hoarse whinny, like a colt with a cold, and immediately resumes his fixed expression. On the boat's return, the strange man stalks silently

away, and Streaky receives the money, but with such a look of discontent that the customer is provoked to ask: "Well, what's the matter? Isn't that right?"

"Yes, sir, all right. *We* doesn't get much out of this here."

"What do you mean? Isn't the boat yours?"

"Well, sir, 'tis actiually Tim's Pardner's. The Shepherd's out a fishing with mine."

In like manner, every attempt—however well planned—to embark in Tim's boat results in a voyage in the Shepherd's, which, eventually turning out to be chartered on behalf of Bubs, has been remitted by that gentleman to Jarspur, the entire proceeds uniting in the coffers of the Pardner, who graciously permits Messrs. Jarspur, Shepherd, Tim, Streaky, and Bubs to appropriate to themselves whatever extra coin any gel'man will "rise."

Jarspur, and occasionally Bubs, had an inconvenient habit of fixing upon you in the full tide of fashion that swept the Esplanade, and if you sought to fend them off with a nod and a quickened step, defeating this manœuvre by promptly turning, adapting their paces to yours, and plunging at once into topics weathery and fishy.

"Jarspur," I said, impressively, on one of these occasions, halting suddenly, "business *has* been slack of late. That there *are* rock-whiting to be caught on what you call the ginny-ground, I make no question. Porpoises *were* off the pier on Thursday, and I hope that the structure and general appearance of that edifice met with their entire approval. If any gentle-

man—I don't think he will—should step across the walk, and beg your acceptance of five shillings, it might, or might not, go towards the purchase of a new 'spritsle.' But, as these matters are really your concern, not mine, as I can neither take a reach off, nor rise half-a-crown, it is in your own interest that I strongly advise you to resume your natural position off the Old Ship, and keep a bright look-out for other victims than he who has now the honour of wishing you good morning."

Jarspur did not understand me. I did not expect he would. But, in his astonishment, he allowed me to walk quietly away, nor did he ever again offer to disturb my promenade.

It was in consequence of this delicacy that I selected Jarspur as the especial custodian of the *Eveleen Brown* (born *Barberina*), on the express understanding that the mysterious Pardner should be entirely excluded from the business. Moreover, I had known Jarspur from my childhood, a period which he seemed to consider had not fully elapsed, his manner still retaining some tinge of that patronage which had directed my marine studies in earlier years. Jarspur could never comprehend the mighty change which lies between twelve years old and twenty.

"Pull to yer, Dick!" bawled Jarspur, one day, to a dashing lieutenant of dragoons, whom he had last seen as a boy with turn-down collars. ("Dick" and I were taking a reach off, in Jarspur's, that is, Tim's Pardner's boat, in memory of old times, and my friend was steering.)

"Confound his impudence!" growled the gallant

officer in my ear. "At least, he might have said 'keep her away.'"

Although the *Eveleen Brown* cost but ten pounds to buy, she cost thirty-five to repair. She wanted so many new things, that, upon the whole, it would have been more economical to have sunk her and built another. When all was done, her propensity for admitting the ocean was as strong as ever. I never saw such a vessel; the water seemed to enter through the solid boards.

"Pay her well," suggested Jarspur; "you can't do nuthen more."

I did pay her, and Jarspur too; but the *Eveleen Brown* defied pitch, and leaked away as merrily as ever. Paying did not pay. All I could do was to provide the means of pumping; and as the *Eveleen*, to do her justice, drank with great regularity, and never required pumping under three-quarters of an hour, I knew exactly when it became necessary to examine the well.

My great delight was to go out entirely alone. As the sheets all led aft, I was able to trim and manage my sails without quitting the helm. Many and many a day have I thus spent upon the waters, and if I did not actually—

Watch all night to see unfold
Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold,

I was, at all events, not long behind that fiery steed—often, weather permitting, not returning ashore till dusk.

One drawback to these excursions was the perpetual

putting forth of a small fleet of boats, on pretence that I and my little craft were in need of assistance. Whenever I saw these speculative salvors bearing down upon me, I always knew that business on the beach was fearfully slack, or else that certain threatening appearances in the weather had really escaped my observation, and made a speedy return advisable. Nevertheless, there seemed to be something ignominious in being towed home by a common pleasure-boat, and I believe, now, that I ran considerable risks in attempting to avoid this necessity.

On the morning of the twenty-eighth of July, 'thirty seven, I had put to sea so early as almost to forestal my friend Cethon, and actually met the sun upon the rosy wave. The breeze from the south-west was soft and steady, and I stood right out to sea till the summer haze began to shut out the shore—about six miles distant. Here I lowered my sails, pumped the *Eveleen Brown*, and lying down in the bottom on my coat, began to eat my breakfast, letting the boat drift as she would. It was now about half-past six, and already beginning to grow warm. With the exception of a few thin white streaks in the heavens, and whatever might be meant by the peculiar haze I have mentioned, everything seemed to betoken one of those perfect days of summer which, commencing with a cool fresh breeze, melt to breathlessness at noon. Great then was my astonishment, when, glancing landward, I beheld six or seven boats, with Jarspur conspicuous in the van, making towards me under a press of sail.

"This is really *too* absurd," thought I. "Because

they lost sight of me for a moment in the fog, they thought I had come to grief. Now, I'll just give you a little dance, my friends."

My sails were hoisted in a minute, and with nearly a two-mile start, away I dashed before the wind. The *Eveleen Brown*, as though inspired with an idea similar to my own, behaved in a manner I have never witnessed before or since, and went hissing through the water with an actual speed which promised to make the chase, if persevered with, a protracted one.

With the assistance of my glass, I could detect Jarspur standing in the bow of his boat, and making frantic gestures in the direction, as I thought, of a couple of seagulls; but as there was nothing in the evolutions of those fowls to create alarm, I merely set my little gaff-topsail, and cracked on. Hereupon, I observed Jarspur make one frenzied movement, as though to cast himself overboard; then, putting about, return shorewards, followed by his consorts.

I was now off Kemp Town. The breeze had freshened, shifted a little eastward, and dispersed the fog.

I was considerably elated at my success, and the idea suddenly occurred to me of running up Channel as far as Sandgate, where a part of my family were at the time residing.

The distance, as far as I could guess, was about seventy-five miles. It would be, of course, a two days' voyage; but, with the present wind, and nearly a whole flood-tide before me, there was almost a certainty of making Hastings by two or three in the afternoon. Acting upon this determination, I shaped my course for Beachy Head, weathered that point about noon in

safety, and then, the sea having risen rather unpleasantly, hauled in nearer the shore. I had been compelled to take in my topsail and one reef of the main-sail; but the *Eveleen Brown* had comported herself nobly, and, despite the ruffled sea, had not required more pumping than on ordinary occasions.

For a moment the idea occurred to me of landing at Eastbourne; but the breeze being fair and steady, and having yet many hours of daylight, I abandoned the prudent thought, and stood away for Hastings. Before, however, I was off St. Leonard's, I had reason to repent this resolution. With the making of the ebb-tide, the sea had roughened considerably, not only retarding the progress of my small craft, but occasionally sending over her low bulwarks very embarrassing contributions to the water she already contained. To add to my annoyance, the wind, though light, was becoming foul. I did not think it possible to beat up to Hastings, and, after a moment's irresolution, put the *Eveleen's* nose about, and made direct for the nearest shore. But, alas! on nearing it, there was no landing for *me*. A surf, such as I could not have imagined would have risen so speedily, was breaking on the rocky strand, and one huge wave, that sent a sheet of snow twenty yards up the beach, convinced me that my cockleshell would be inevitably swamped in any attempt to land. There was nothing for it but to stand out once more to sea.

The next three hours were truly miserable. During this interval, it needed all my care to keep the wretched little craft from broaching to. The tide, now once more running to the eastward, swept me

past my intended haven; but I had great hopes of finding an even better refuge at Rye, about the angle of the bay, and, by dint of sculling, got, as I considered, near enough to the land to discover the narrow entrance.

Owing, however, to the waning light, I failed to do this. Although within half a mile of the beach, no opening could I discover in that brown bulwark, on which the waves were breaking with a very unpleasant roar.

It was now as dark as it intended to be; when, as I was coasting slowly along, a light, like a mighty star, sprang suddenly out of the gloom, right ahead.

"Hurrah!" I shouted. "Folkestone!"

The tide and wind both setting me in that direction, I steered at once for the friendly beacon, not heeding that the shore slipped away presently altogether from my lee, as I was aware that the land about this point trended considerably to the northward.

At what period I became conscious of the rather serious nautical mistake I was committing, I cannot precisely remember. I think it must have been when I suddenly detected, at an immense distance and in a totally different direction, an assemblage of lights, which I recognized as being, beyond all question, those of Folkestone. For what, then, had I been steering?

In coasting along from Ryde to Dungeness, the brilliant pharos of Cape Grisnez, on the French coast, appears exactly ahead. Having no compass to direct my course, and the land being all but invisible, I, in

place of rounding Dungeness, and hauling to the northward, had continued to stand right on across the Channel, until (according to my after calculations) I was at least twelve miles from shore.

Just as I arrived at this conviction, the breeze died entirely away. The sea, too, had fallen. There was nothing but a heavy, harmless ground swell. A change, however, might occur at any moment, and, should it be for the worse, the chances of making Folkestone in a little, open, leaky boat, were but indifferent. There was but one course to pursue. I handed my sails, pumped the *Eveleen* free, drained the last drops in my wine-flask, and, seizing my sculls, turned the boat's head shoreward, and set to work.

The *Eveleen Brown* was a heavy puller at the best. Those four hours' labour were the severest I have ever known. Often I was obliged to pause a few moments from sheer exhaustion; and in these intervals felt, in that watery solitude and silence, intensely alone. It is said that those whose duty it is to keep watch at night are witnesses of many a strange phenomenon in sea and air. It may be that fatigue and excitement prompted my imagination, but at all events both my ear and eye were sensible of impressions I could not understand—singular gleams and sweeps of light, rushing, and sighing cadences, with now and then a deep booming plunge, and one peculiar sound which twice recurred close at hand, and was comparable to nothing but some monstrous denizen of the deep coming up, with a mighty gurgling gasp, to breathe.

So worn was I before reaching land, that it was more by the weight of my body than by muscular action of the arms that I still continued to row; and never shall I forget the relief I experienced in hearing the first welcome sounds of land—the bark of a dog. I pulled for that bark. It seemed to proceed from the neighbourhood of a whitish patch of shore. A few minutes yet, and the *Eveleen* grounded on a small spit of white sand.

I was dreamily conscious of being assisted out of the boat by several men of great breadth and stature—of being hoarsely questioned as to my name and object—of tumbling down on the beach without reply—of good-natured giants placing coats over me, and others under my head—of reviving in a few minutes, giving a satisfactory account of myself and views, being assisted up to a sort of cave in the cliff, used by the navvies at work on the then incomplete railway as a refreshment-room, and there partaking of some of the most execrable beer ever surely poured down human throat; but, to mine, nectar.

More distinctly do I recal to mind re-embarking, in two hours' time, under the immediate auspices of the coast-guard; and, having but three miles of my course to retrace, arriving at Sandgate to breakfast.



THE LODGER'S STORY.

IF the dietary at Doctor Glumper's could not be pronounced purely Spartan in its principles, it was simply that the Spartan stomach—well disciplined as we know it to have been—would have revolted at such treatment. Salamis demanded other stamina than could be supplied by the washings of a beef-bone. Xerxes was not defied under the immediate inspiration of rice-dumpling.

Doctor Glumper's was not much worse, in its commissariat, my dear Major Jackman, than hundreds of other establishments, at which—in those days—the sons of gentlemen studied and starved. There was enough to live upon, provided we could have fairly eaten what there *was*. Therein lay the difficulty. Our meals, bad enough at the beginning of the week, grew gradually worse towards the end: insomuch that we arrived at the Sabbath, much in the condition of a band of young seafarers, who had been cast away, and were only saved from utter starvation

by the opportune arrival of a ship freighted with roast-beef and Yorkshire pudding.

True, there was a life-boat. Its name, in our case, was "Hannah's Basket." Hannah was the laundress, and, on Saturday afternoon, after delivering the linen, regularly made her appearance in the playground, displaying the bottom of her buck-basket paved with delicacies, carefully selected on the principle of combining the three grand qualities of sweetness, stickiness, and economy.

Elegance and refinement were little thought of, in those days. The boy who brought a silver fork would have been simply regarded as possessed of a jocular turn. As for the spoon and six towels, which, according to the printed terms of Glumper House, seemed absolutely essential to a sound classical education—the spoon found its way into a species of armoury of Mrs. Glumper's, formed of the spoils of the young Philistines, her pupils, prohibited toys, confiscated literature, and so forth ; while the towels, absorbed in the general republic of that article, passed into indiscriminate use. Well, we had nothing to say against steel forks. The meat, peradventure, might have proved impervious to any less undaunted metal.

Our Monday's dinner was boiled leg of mutton. One helping. More was not refused ; but the ill-concealed impatience with which the application was received, established the custom of contenting ourselves with what was first supplied. The due reward of this pusillanimity appeared on the following day, in the form of half-consumed joints—cold, ghastly, seamed with red murderous streaks, and accompanied

by certain masses of ill-washed cabbage, interesting as an entomological study; but, as a viand, repulsive by reason of the caterpillars, whose sodden dull-green corpses I have seen lying in ranks beside the plates of fastidious feeders.

Three days a week, we had rice-pudding—a confection which, by an unfortunate conjuncture of circumstances, I never could from infancy endure; but the great trial of our lives, and stomachs, was reserved for Saturday, when we sat down to what was satirically styled a “beef-steak-pie.”

Mean and debased must be the spirit of that bullock who would confess to any share in such a production! Into the composition of that dish beef entered as largely as the flesh of the unicorn into peas-porridge. The very wildness of the rumours that were afloat respecting its actual origin proved how dark, difficult, and mysterious was the inquiry. School tradition pointed to the most grotesque and inharmonious elements, as actually detected in the pie. Substances, in texture, flavour, and appearance, the reverse of bovine, had been over and over again deposed to by the dismayed recipients, who proved their good faith by preferring famine itself to such “beef-steak”-pie. The utter impossibility of identifying the ingredients as having pertained to any animal recognised by British cooks, was the terrific feature of the case.

Whatever was the prevailing element of the pie, it was supplemented with minor matters, about which, though they do not appear in any accepted recipe for the dish in question, there could be no dispute.

Sholto Shillito, for instance, who had the appetite

of an ogre, boldly swallowed the portion assigned him, but quietly and sternly removed to the side of his plate three fingers and a ligament of the thumb of an ancient dog-skin glove.

Billy Duntze discovered and secreted something that was for several halves preserved in the school as the leg of a flamingo. At all events, it was introduced, so labelled, to every new arrival, on the very first evening of his sojourn among us.

George van Kempen found a pair of snuffers.

Charley Brooksbank remarked a singular protuberance in his portion of pie, and, carefully excavating the same, as if it were a Phœnician relic, brought to light something that looked like the head of a doll that had been afflicted with hydrocephalus. On being cut into, it was green. For the first few weeks of each half—that is, while our pocket-money held out—we got on pretty well. Our pocket-money exhausted, starvation stared us in the face.

The present generation may wonder why we did not try the effect of respectful remonstrance. The times, as I have said, were different, then, and besides, the present generation didn't personally know Mrs. Glumper. A fearful woman was Mrs. Glumper. I don't mean that she raved, struck, or demeaned herself in any way not ordinarily witnessed in polite society; but I do mean that she had a cool, quiet scorn, a consciousness of a putting-down power, as though an elephant, just tickling the ground with a foot as big as a writing-table, were to show how easily and effectually he might, if he pleased, turn that table upon *you*.

In addition to this overbearing contempt, Mrs. Glumper had a thousand ways of making us uncomfortable, without resorting to overt tyranny ; insomuch that to be " out of favour " with that excellent lady was regarded as the climax of school misery.

Not a word have I to say against the doctor. Even *then* I felt him to be a good man. In remembering his character, I believe him to have been one of the best that ever breathed. With the understanding of a sage, he was as simple as a child ; *so* simple, that it was matter of genuine astonishment that he retained the coat upon his back ; *so* simple, that the circumstance of his having espoused Mrs. G. became almost intelligible. For this guileless act, rumour even supplied the motive. Mrs. Glumper, then Miss Kittiewinkle, was herself the mistress of an extremely preparatory school, and it was in the cowed and miserable victims of her Muscovite rule that the kind doctor read an invitation of the most pressing kind, to take the mistress under *his*. The consequence of this union of interests was, that the establishment, losing its infantine character, flourished up into a school of seventy boys ; only the very smallest of whom were submitted to Mrs. Glumper's immediate dominion.

Affairs were in this unsatisfactory position towards the middle of a certain half. It was precisely the period at which the greatest impecuniosity usually prevailed. Money was tighter than any one could recollect. Hannah's bread-stuffs were in a condition of blockade. Could " shirtings " have been exchanged for eatings, Hannah might have done a brisk business in turn-downs, but the old lady was too wary for such traffic.

We held a consultation. The doctor's cow, which sometimes grazed in the playing-field, was incidentally present, and by her sleek, contented aspect, excited universal disgust.

"Crib her oilcake!" squeaked a voice from the outer senatorial circle.

"It is well for the honourable felon on the back benches," remarked our president, Jack Rogers, who delighted to give to our consultations the aspect of a grave debate, "that his skull is beyond punching-distance. If the oilcake lavished on yonder pampered animal had been vested in trustees, to the sole and separate use, notwithstanding coverture, of *Mrs. Glumper*—I—well, I will go so far as to say this council might have taken into consideration what has fallen from the distinguished thief. But it's *Glumper's*, and the proposal of the estimable criminal will be received with the contempt it deserves."

A murmur of approval greeted this speech, after which sundry suggestions were offered.

Burned pens (*Gus Halfacre* remarked) were edible. He *might* say, toothsome.

"My left boot is at the service of the commonwealth," said *Frank Lightfoot*. "The right, having been recently repaired and thickened, and being devoid of a large nail in the sole (of which I invite the state to take heed), I reserve to myself for the last extremity."

"Thus extremes *will* meet," observed the president. "But this is no season for jesting. Has anybody anything to propose?"

"We have always *Murrell Robinson*," said *Sholto*

Shillito, gloomily, and with an aspect so wolfish, that the young gentleman alluded to—a plump rosy child of eight, who had not yet had time to dwindle—set up a howl of terror.

“It might—humph—yes, it might be politic,” said the chairman, thoughtfully. “’Twould touch her home. If Jezebel Glumper lost a couple, say, of pupils, under the peculiar circumstances glanced at by the honourable senator in the inky corduroys, she might have some—shall I say bowels?—for those of the remainder. But the observation of my honourable friend has suggested to my mind a course of action which, though in some respects similar, and promising the like results, is not open to the same objections. Some fellow must *bolt*, placing on record his reasons for that step.”

Jack’s proposal, unexpected as it was, met with considerable favour, the only difficulty being to decide who the fugitive should be. Bolting from school by no means implied return to the paternal mansion. Everybody looked inquiringly at his neighbour. No one volunteered.

The chairman surveyed us with mournful severity.

“There was once,” he faltered, “an individual, known to you all (except the fifth class)—wept over by some—who, on learning that he might greatly benefit certain public property by jumping into a hole, asked no questions, popped in, and did it. Has our school no Curtius? Must seventy stomachs languish unsatisfied for want of a single heart? Shillito, you greedy young beggar, *you* will go.”

Mr. Shillito emphatically invoked benediction on

himself, in the event of his doing anything of the kind.

"Percy Pobjoy," said the president, "you are one at odds with fortune. You are penniless—worse, for your week's pay, old chap, is impounded for a month. You have sailed into the extreme north of Mrs. Glumper's favour, and are likely to make it your permanent abode. You detest rice. You have scruples concerning caterpillars. Percival, my friend, three ladies of eminence, whose names and office are fully recorded in your classical dictionary, unanimously select *you* as the party to perform this public service."

Mr. Pobjoy regretted to run counter to the anticipations of *any* lady, but, possessing, as he did, a grandmother who would, he conceived, prove more than a match for the three Destinies—and he would throw the Furies in—he must deny himself the gratification proposed.

"Then," resumed the president, cheerfully, with the air of having at last secured his man, "I at once address myself to the distinguished senator on the inverted flower-pot. He who licked that bully, the miller's boy, in twelve minutes and a half, will be again our champion. Joles will go."

Mr. Joles somewhat sullenly failed to perceive the analogy between pitching into a cheeky clown, and running away from school. Could the honourable president detect the smallest indication of verdure in his (Mr. J.'s) sinister organ of vision? Such a contingency was, nevertheless, essential to his (Mr. J.'s) adopting the course required of him.

Other honourable senators having, when appealed

to, returned answers of a no less discouraging character, there seemed to be but one course remaining—that of drawing lots. A resolution to do this was carried, after some discussion: it being agreed that he on whom the lot might fall, should decamp on the morrow, and, having found some secure hiding-place, write to one of his schoolmates, or (perhaps preferably) to his own friends, declaring that the step he had taken was prompted by a reluctance to perish of starvation.

The proposed time was subsequently extended to one week, in order that he who drew the fatal lot might have time to try the effect of a touching appeal to his parents or friends, fairly setting forth the treatment we were experiencing. If this answered, well and good. If not, the honourable gentleman (said our chief) “will cut his lucky this day se’nnight.”

Lots were then solemnly drawn, in the primitive Homeric fashion, every boy’s name—those of the fifth class excepted—being inscribed on a slip of paper, and flung into a hat. There was a strong feeling in favour of exempting Jack Rogers, our president—the Nestor of the school—who, being near seventeen, and about to leave, would, no doubt, have preferred fighting through the remainder of his term, famish as he might. But the good fellow flounced at the idea, as though it had been an insult, and himself cast in his name.

Carefully following our classic model, the hat was then violently shaken. The lot that, in obedience to a fillip from the Fates, first leaped out and touched the earth, was to decide the question. *Two* flew out, but

one of these rested on the shaker's sleeve. There was a decided disinclination to take up the other. It seemed as if nobody had, until this supreme crisis, fully realised the consequences that might ensue from thus abandoning at once both school and home.

My heart, I confess, stood still for a moment, as Jack Rogers stood forward and picked up the paper. Then I felt the blood mount to my cheeks, as our leader slowly read, "Charles Stuart Trelawny."

"Always in luck, Charley!" he continued, laughing; but I think Jack only intended to keep up my spirits. "Write directly, my boy," he added, in a graver tone, "and, take my advice, write bang up to the governor. Treat it as a matter of business. Mamma is safe to put in *her* word."

I wrote at once:—

"My dear Papa,—I hope you are quite well. I ain't. You know I'm not greedy, and not so foolish as to expect at school such jolly things as at home. So you must not be angry when I say what I'm *obliged* to say, that we can't eat what Mrs. Glumper says is dinner; and as there's nothing else but slop and a bit of bread, everybody's starving.

"I remain, your dutiful Son,

"C. S. TRELAWNY.

"P.S. If you don't like to speak to Mrs. Glumper, would you mind asking mamma and Agnes, with my love, to send me a big loaf of bread (with crust, and, if possible, browned) that might last a week?

"Lieut.-Gen. Trelawny, C.B., K.H.,

"Penrhyn Court."

I thought this despatch sufficiently business-like, and waited with some anxiety for the result. If papa only knew what depended on his decision! He *ought* to put faith in me, for I had never been untruthful, and had done myself no more than justice in reminding him that I was no glutton.

It was, I believe, on the fourth day of suspense, that a large parcel was brought into the playground, a crowd of curious and expectant youths escorting it, and witnessing its delivery. Small blame to them!

There resided within the limits of that parcel—for, though mighty, it *had* its limits—first, a beefsteak pie, not only composed of real beef, but enriched with eggs and minor excellences, all trembling in a jellied gravy of surpassing savour. There was, secondly, a chosen company of mince-pies, clinging together from sheer richness, in such wise that a very stoic, if hungry, might be reluctant to “sever such sweet friends,” and devour them two at a time.

There was revealed, in the third place, a large apple turnover: so called, I should surmise, because a boy might turn it over and over, and back again, and, after all, find himself unable to determine which looked the more enticing—the sugary, or the buttery side. And, finally, there was a cake which I can scarcely repent having characterised, at the moment, as “tremendous!”

There was no letter, but the augury seemed good. Such ambassadors as pies and turnovers speak with tongues of their own. It was *not* intended that we should perish. We should see the effect of my manly and business-like appeal, perhaps that very day, in an

improved bill of fare, and a diminution of caterpillars. As to husbanding our new supplies, such an idea never occurred to any one. Alas, that we could not *all* partake! Lots had to be once more drawn, and a lucky party of eighteen, with Jack Rogers and myself, honorary, made extremely short work of the parcel.

Shade follows sunshine. There was no amelioration of the accustomed fare at dinner; but a decided cloud on Mrs. Glumper's haughty brow was interpreted favourably by Jack—a close observer of human nature—as evincing her disgust at the costly reform to which she saw herself committed.

Alas! for once, our leader was wrong. Not that day, nor the following day, nor any other day, so long as that establishment survived, was there any departure from the time-(dis)honoured rules of diet.

It was long before I came into possession of the state papers actually exchanged on this occasion. Premising that my father, busied with his other letters, had handed over mine to my mother, saying, "Do see to this, my dear," here they are:—

The Lady Caroline Trelawny to Mrs. Glumper.

"Dear Mrs. Glumper,—I trust that the size of the parcel I forward to my boy will not alarm you. Charley is growing very rapidly, so rapidly, indeed, that his father drew my attention to the circumstance, not without some misgiving that he might outgrow his strength. You may smile at the anxiety that prompts me to remind one so experienced as yourself in the care of youth, that good, clean, and sufficient food is more than ever necessary to my tall boy. He

is not a dainty boy, and the conditions I have mentioned will, I am sure, meet all that he, or I, on his behalf, could desire. With compliments to Dr. Glumper, I am, dear Mrs. Glumper, sincerely yours,

“CAROLINE M. TRELAWNY.”

Mrs. Glumper to the Lady Caroline Trelawny.

“Dear Madam,—Perhaps the most satisfactory answer I can make to your obliging note will be conveyed in the assurance that Dr. Glumper, myself, our family, and the masters (except Monsieur Legourmet, who insists on providing his own meals), live invariably with, and as, our boys; and that, in the matter of food, there is neither stint nor compulsion.

“Respectfully yours,

“JEZEBEL GLUMPER.”

There was, unfortunately, just sufficient colouring of truth in this to satisfy the consciences of both ladies. They *did* dine, or rather sit down, with us, and being helped first to the tit-bits, accompanied with hot gravy and *et cæteras*, at their own cross-table, got on pretty well. As for the good old doctor, he was the most innocent of accomplices in promoting our starvation. He simply did as his wife decreed, caring nothing for himself, and would have starved with his boys without a murmur.

After it became apparent that our move had failed, all, before the arrival of the fatal day, passed with me like a curious dream. I felt as if I no longer belonged to the school, hardly to myself, and though no verbal

reference was made to my impending disappearance, I saw that no one had forgotten it. Significant were the facts that Percy Pobjoy, who had owed me eightpence from time immemorial, borrowed that sum to repay me; and that another chap, with whom I had had a row, spontaneously asked my pardon.

Saturday—the day—appeared in due course. There remained but one more meal, one more chance for Mrs. Glumper and for me.

“If she gives us but a commonly decent feed to-day,” muttered Jack Rogers, pinching my elbow, as we went in, “by Jove, Charley, my boy, we’ll stop *your* nefarious plans!”

No such chance. There it was, the flabby mass of rice, helped first, as a good appetite-choking stuff, to relieve the succeeding dish from any undue pressure.

After rice appeared the much-dreaded pie, glaring yellowly, with its coarse pretentious outside—prototype of many a living humbug—veiling one knows not what of false and vile. Oh, the contrast to the rich and delicate article—alike only in name—sent by my mother!

The pie was served, and was undergoing the usual suspicious scrutiny, when Mrs. Glumper, with the voice of a herald, proclaimed:—

“Master Trelawny will eat every grain of that rice before he receives anything further.”

There was a half-audible titter; but I remained firm, and thus ended the last “dinner” at Glumper House.

Jack Rogers put his arm in mine.

“I’m sorry for this, Trelawny,” he said.

"I'm *not*," said I, trying to smile, "exc—except for——" I thought of my mother, and broke down.

"We'll have a palaver, at all events," said Jack.

In a moment, a large concourse assembled under our favourite elm. If the truth must out, I could have dispensed with this ceremony, which somehow imparted a sensation of being present at one's own burial. But Jack Rogers was not to be denied this splendid opportunity of speech-making.

He did speak, in a manner, and at a length, that must have been remembered in the school long after I—its theme—was forgotten there. In his peroration, he observed that the honour and the well-being of Glumper's could not, in this extremity, have been confided to worthier hands. Nor was it this community alone that was to profit by the important step about to be taken. The eyes of every school in Europe were, or would be, if they knew what was going on, fixed on Glumper House. Mr. Trelawny was about to place his foot on the first rung of the ladder of affluence, fame, and power. What pecuniary means, he would frankly ask, were at my disposal?

I replied, with the like openness, "Eightpence."

"The precise amount," resumed Jack, triumphantly, "(within one-and-tenpence) from whence colossal fortunes spring! 'He began his immortal career with half-a-crown.' Or, 'The origin of this eminent citizen was of the humblest; he commenced life with two-and-sixpence.' Or, 'Our modern Croesus began the battle of life with the moiety of a five-shilling piece. He died worth TWO MILLIONS

sterling!' Such are among our most familiar passages in biography. Charles, my boy, again you are in luck." And he shook my hand warmly.

I ventured incidentally to suggest that I was *not* in possession of the magical amount required.

"Nay, by George, but you shall be!" exclaimed Jack. "Here's sixpence towards it. Think of it when you're a confoundedly crusty old millionaire, and send old Jack a haunch from one of your deer-parks—the Scotch one. Who'll subscribe to the Trelawny testimonial?"

Hard up as the good chaps were, so many came forward, that a sum of about nine-and-sixpence was poured into the hands of our chief. But Jack's remark had been working strangely in my mind. Something admonished me to keep strictly to the rule which had, apparently, prospered so well.

In a few words I thanked my mates, therefore, for their kind intentions, but declined to take more than was required to make up the exact fortune-making sum. I would do nothing (I added, in substance) to risk a failure, nor impair the innate vigour, the youthful freshness, of half-a-crown, by dabbling with an adolescent amount like ten-and-twopence; a sum entirely unassociated with any of those encouraging biographies quoted by our president. I would take my half-crown—no more.

As the day was waning, it became necessary to make preparations for my departure. Accordingly, attended by a few faithful friends, I proceeded to make up a small bundle, such as I could conveniently carry, leaving the remainder of my possessions at the

disposal of fate. There was one thing I was very loth to abandon. It was a flower-pot, containing the commencement of a very promising scarlet-runner. It had been the source of great interest and consolation. I half resolved to make it the sharer of my fortunes. But Jack Rogers objected. In vain he taxed his memory to recall any one instance in which the successful adventurer had flung himself upon the world with half-a-crown *and* a scarlet-runner. If the case of Jack and the Beanstalk were relied upon, he (Rogers) would only remark that the present age of inquiry had succeeded in throwing very considerable doubt upon portions of that narrative. This was enough.

About escaping there was no difficulty. Part of the playing-field was out of sight of the house; and although it was penal to frequent this portion, and it was the duty of the monitor of the day to report any one so doing, on the present occasion the monitor in person gave me a leg up the wall. There was a last shaking of hands, and a suppressed cheer, when I paused for a moment on the top.

"You'll write that letter to-morrow, then, from— from somewhere?" said Jack, mysteriously. (I nodded.) "All right, old boy?"

"Ye-es," I responded. "All right, you know. Hoor——"

Down I dropped——adrift!

That wall seemed to make all the difference. I don't think that, until my feet alighted on the alien ground of Mr. Turfitt's brick-field, I had fully realised the fact of running away. But a runaway I was

now ; and, to do my boyish courage justice, no thought of returning or seeking the protection of home ever entered into my imagination. One brief and bitter pang I did experience, as I thought of the probable effect the tidings of my flight might have upon the happy home circle ; but I met it with the reflection that the letter I should write must set them at ease as to my personal safety and prospects. In the mean time, it was obviously desirable to get away.

Dr. Glumper's was situated in an open suburb north of London, and therefore well on the high road to fortune. I set my face straight towards the quarter in which I concluded the City to lie, and trudged on, vaguely wondering what would happen to me when bedtime came.

Suddenly, a bright thought, suggested by the name on a public-house sign, shot across my mind. I had a friend—Philip Concanen—who resided at Chelsea, nothing of a walk, five miles. Phil had long outgrown Glumper's, though his name and his fame and a very rudely-executed miniature of Mrs. G., carved on the inside of his whilom desk, still survived. He was a middle-aged man now—going on, I should think, for nineteen—and had called once at Glumper's in a gig, driving himself. I had been a favourite of Phil's, and felt convinced that he would not only afford me his counsel, but keep *mine*. Well over the first steps of my pilgrimage, I had no fears about the remainder.

Philip was already in business with his father and uncle—wealthy brewers and distillers—whose establishment displayed on its river-face a frontage so imposing as almost to justify the tradition that it had

once been mistaken for Chelsea Hospital. On the land side, you merely dived down a dark and narrow lane, sole shaft to the gold mine that lay beyond. Down this passage, as evening fell, I groped my way, and, by great good luck, found Philip in sole command (till Monday morning) of "Concanen Brothers and Concanen."

Philip gave me a cordial welcome, and, thanks to his old housekeeper, a most heart-reviving supper, and listened to my story with all the kindness and interest I had expected; also with a degree of gravity I had *not* expected. Intercourse with men and vats had already taken off the edge of his romance. There is, in beer, a decided tendency to sap the life of sentiment. In meal, I have since observed, a contrary rule prevails. Your miller's daughter—if he has one—is almost always a heroine.

My friend criticised with some severity the golden visions of Jack Rogers, repudiated belief in the efficacy of half-a-crown as the especial keystone of affluence, and even hinted (though remotely) at the desirability of my making terms with the home authorities, and abandoning my enterprise.

On this point, however, I was firmness itself; and, after a lengthened discussion, the following convention was agreed to:—

That the old housekeeper, Mrs. Swigsby, should be admitted to our complete confidence, with a view to my occupancy of the spare bedroom till Monday. That on that day I should transfer my quarters to Philip's own private smoko-harness room, from whence a side portal and a passage, dark at noon, gave upon

Paradise-alley, and thence to the privacy of Jew's-road. That I should retain such refuge until I had enjoyed an opportunity of "feeling my way"—which, indeed, would necessarily occur whenever I crossed the threshold. That on the slightest suspicion of my whereabouts becoming known, I should depart, so as to avoid compromising my friend. Lastly, that I should at once write to my parents an assurance of my personal safety.

With some difficulty—owing to Mrs. Swigsby's being a deafer human creature than I could have conceived possible—that excellent lady was indoctrinated in the matter, and dismissing from her mind a first idea that I was the nephew of Mr. Arthur Thistlewood, and deeply compromised in certain, then recent, proceedings in Cato-street, promised every assistance. This arranged, I sat down to my letter :—

"My dear Papa and Mama,—I hope you are quite well. We ate up the Pie and other Things you so kindly sent, and then began Starving again. Rice, and Catterpillars, and what they call Beefstake-Pie but Isn't, *as usual*. I hoped you would have written to Mrs. Glumper, but perhaps you were Afrade. We held a Counsel, and Settled to run away One by One—till the Dinners get better. We drew Lots, and it Fell to me. I knew you would Aprove, for I heard you once say, about Captain Shurker, that it wasn't honourable to Back Out. I have my Second-best suit, some linen, my Bible, and Latin Delectus, and a Sum of Money which is the Beginning of a Fortune. I know what I am Doing—that is I shall To-morrow

—so I hope you won't be angry and kiss Mama and my love to Agnes and I am your Affectionate Dutiful Son,

“C. S. TRELAWNY.”

Early on Monday morning, Phil introduced me to my new quarters in the smoko-harness room, where we found Mrs. Swigsby engaged in constructing what she called a “trumpery” bed. From the good lady's demeanour, I could not help fancying that she even now harboured some misgivings concerning me, for she glanced at me now and then as if she expected me to go off like a grenade. It was useless, however, to attempt to enlighten her further. Phil confessed as much, and owned that we must take our chance.

He introduced me to the dark passage and private entrance, and presenting me with the key, took his leave, assuring me that no one would enter the apartment until evening, when he would himself bring me supper, bear me company at that meal, and hear how I had felt my way.

When, a few minutes later, I turned into Jew's-road, the sensation of not belonging to myself came back rather strongly, bringing with it a brother sensation, still less soothing—that of not, for the moment, belonging to anybody else! Nevertheless, I held up my head, and marched on as confidently as if I had expected an influential friend to meet me by appointment at the next corner.

How—*how* did people begin? Usually, I thought, with some happy incident. Would any obliging infant, of high birth, do me the favour to be nearly run

over? Any stout gentleman—victim to casual orange-peel—trip and be picked up by me? Any hurrying man of commerce let fall a book containing securities of inestimable value, close to my feet? No; most of these things had had their turn. Fortune scorns to repeat herself. I had a conviction that I must begin at the foot of the ladder. "He" (some great man) "once swept a barber's shop," was a legend of my childhood. Where was such a barber?

"Wanted, a Lad."

It came like an answer. Were these characters *real*? If so, Fortune—though she writes an indifferent hand—has not deserted me. I am a lad. And wanted. Behold me!

I entered the establishment. It wasn't a barber's. Greasier. Pigs' toes, I imagine, prevailed.

"What can I do for *you*, young gentleman?" inquired the stout white-aproned proprietor, brandishing an immense knife.

"Please, do you want a lad?" I asked.

The man looked at me from head to foot. Then he said:

"We *did*, but unfortunately we only take six parlour-boarders at a time; and the Markiss o' Queerfinch has just grabbed the last vacancy for his seventeenth son."

"I—I want to be a lad, sir," I faltered.

"Lookee here, young gentleman; if you don't wan't none of *my* trotters, use your own, or you'll get *me* into a scrape as well as yourself. Now, off with you."

Twice more, tempted by similar announcements, I

ventured to prefer my claims, but with no better success. One glance at my exterior seemed to satisfy everybody that I was not the lad for *them*. Yes, I was too smart! The recent runaway was visible in my still glossy blue jacket and gilt buttons; not to mention the snowy turn-down. I was not sorry when evening came, that I might return home, and recount my adventures to the sympathising Phil.

Philip agreed that I was *not*, perhaps, exactly the sort of messenger a struggling tripe-seller would select, but suggested that I might fly at higher game. Why not feel my way among classes to whom a gentlemanly appearance and manner did *not* form an insuperable objection?

Why not, indeed? Time was precious. Mrs. Swigsby's misgivings were evidently on the increase. I would do it to-morrow.

"Right, my boy," said Phil, as he bade me good night. "Straight, now, to the fountain head, you know."

I *didn't* exactly know. Feeling one's way, and going to the fountain head—though admirable as general principles—were not so easy of application. Where *was* the fountain head?

"In your great banking and commercial firms," Phil had said, over our wine, "always deal with Principals."

My friend evidently assumed that I should seek out parties of this description. Accordingly, selecting from the Directory the names of a very eminent City banking firm, I "felt my way" towards their distant domicile, and found myself in the presence of about

fifty clerks—all busily employed. After standing for some time unnoticed, I approached one of the desks.

“Please, sir, I want your head.”

“My *what*?” inquired the clerk, with considerable energy. “What do you want with my head?”

I explained that I meant his Principal; the head of the firm: whereupon the clerk smiled languidly.

“Mr. Ingott’s down at Goldborough Park,” he said; “but if it’s anything about the Turkish Loan, we’ll send an express. He can be here to-morrow.”

I assured him it had nothing to do with the Turkish Loan, or any loan, and that any other partner of the house would do as well.

The clerk nodded, whispered to another clerk, and, desiring me to follow, led the way through a labyrinth of desks, into an inner room, where sat an old gentleman reading the paper. He looked at me inquiringly through his gold eyeglasses. The clerk whispered—and—

“Well, my young friend?” said the old banker.

“Pl—please, sir,” I blurted out, “do you want a confidential lad?”

The clerk tittered; but the old gentleman, with one look, dismissed him, and proceeded:

“Who sent you hither, my boy, and what do you mean?”

His manner was very kind, so I told him at once, that nobody sent me; that, acting upon advice, I was engaged in feeling my way, and wished to begin by being a lad—a *confidential* lad, if possible; that, with that view, I had come straight to the fountain head;

that being, I must confess, at variance with my friends, I could not mention whence I came, but that he might rely upon my honesty; and that I was prepared, if necessary, to deposit in the hands of the firm a certain sum of money, as an indemnification for any losses that might be incurred through my inexperience.

The old gentleman inquired the amount.

"Two-and-sixpence."

I saw his eye twinkle; then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he put his hand upon my shoulder and turned me to the light.

"Hem—I thought so," I fancied I heard him mutter. Then he added aloud: "See here, my lad. I cannot make so important an engagement on my own responsibility. I must consult my partners in the firm. Sit down in the messenger's room—that door yonder. In half an hour I will give you your answer."

In the messenger's room I found a respectable-looking youth, eating bread-and-cheese. He offered me some, but I could not eat. Kind as the old gentleman's manner was, there was something in it that gave me uneasiness. It almost seemed as if he knew me.

"Who," I asked the messenger, "is that old gentleman who said he must consult his partners?"

"Sir Edward Goldshore—him that lives at Bilton Abbey, near Penrhyn."

"Penrhyn? General Trelawny's?"

"That, sir, is the ticket. The general often lunches here when he's in town. Consult his partners, did the governor say? Why, they're all out of town but *him*!"

"Don't you," I asked, faintly, "think this room of yours rather hot? I'll—take a run—and—come back before I'm wanted."

Ere the youth could start any objections, I had vanished.

That unlucky day was doomed to an unluckier close. Concanen made his appearance in the harness-room with a somewhat harassed face.

"It's a bore, my dear old fellow, but I fear your camp must be broken up. There's no trusting old Swigsby. You must move on, Charley, my boy, and, if you won't go slick home, like a reasonable chap, feel your way in other quarters."

There was, obviously, no alternative. I marched on the following morning. But Phil's good offices did not cease until he had seen me established in a (very humble) lodging not far distant, but in a locality where I could continue to feel my way without much chance of recognition. The rent—five shillings a week—Phil at first insisted on paying; but, on my representation that the acceptance of any money aid might vitiate my entire future, the kind fellow consented to purchase, at full value, such articles of my wardrobe as would supply me with all that was necessary for an entire week, leaving my half-crown still intact.

Thus was I, for the second time, adrift. Fortune kept steadily aloof. Go whither, ask whom, I would, the same suspicious look invariably greeted me. Whether I brushed my jacket neatly, or tore experimental holes in the elbows, it seemed that I could never hit the desired medium between gentility and vagabondism.

I shall not describe at length those miserable days, nor the steady diminution of my hopes and resources, until the middle of the second week found me, with my rent paid, indeed, but destitute of everything save the clothes I stood in, and *sixpence*!

I had given up in despair all search for employment. Go home I would not. Of Phil I had heard nothing, and I feared to compromise him by any overt communication. What was to be done?

One morning I was prowling feebly about, *very* hungry, and every now and then feeling the sixpence in my jacket-pocket, as though the very sight of a cook-shop might have drawn it forth, when I noticed an old Jew seated on the lower steps of a house. He was not a neat or a well-washed Jew. I don't think that I ever in after-life beheld a dirtier; but my attention was drawn to him by the demeanour of a potboy, who, in passing, had muttered, "Old chaps sewn up!" and whistled on two fingers, almost over the man's head, a pæan of congratulation upon the circumstance.

The old Jew looked faintly up. The face, though grimy, was not, I thought, ignoble; and, indifferent whither I strolled, I turned to take another look at him. He was very old, very ragged, and, to all appearance, famine-stricken; at least, I never saw hunger written so legibly in any face, except my own. He made a languid motion with his fingers towards me, like a dying creature, but did not beg, and I passed on my way. Suddenly the thought shot across me, "Should the old man *die*!"

The sixpence seemed to give a spontaneous leap in

my pocket, as though inspired with the same idea. Back I went, wavering, for, if I yielded to charitable impulse, what must I myself do? If he would divide it with me—but how ask a dying man for change? I passed him again.

Either my fancy misled me, or the sixpence gave me a discontented punch in the side. "*But,*" I answered, as though in remonstrance with it, "you are the last hope of my fortune; in giving *you* I part with millions—'two millions.'"
A last emphatic punch determined me. I turned once more, walked hastily back, and dropped my two millions into the old man's hand!

How I got through the remainder of that day I hardly know. It was about dusk, when, growing every moment more faint and desponding, I turned to crawl homeward. I was pausing unconsciously before a baker's window, when a hand touched my shoulder. It was my Jew. The old man had changed considerably for the better, and now, of the two, looked far the more alive.

"Good rolls those," said the old Jew, approvingly. "Hungry?"

Almost too weary to speak, I nodded.

"And—and—no money?" asked the old man, with curious eagerness.

I shook my head, and prepared to move away.

"I—I spent that sixpence," resumed the Jew, "but if you don't despise a poor man's haunt, I'll give you a supper, and, if you need it, lodging too. My castle is close at hand."

I looked at him with surprise, and followed him.

Falling into a sort of mendicant gait, he shuffled feebly on, and, turning into a dark narrow street, composed of very small tenements indeed, paused at one of the nearest, and struck upon the window-sill with his crutch-stick.

"Take hold of my coat when she opens the door," said the old Jew. "You may find it darkish below."

It *was* darkish, insomuch that the "she" who opened to us was invisible in the gloom; but a silver voice, that was not the Jew's, uttered an exclamation of welcome, and died away, like a spirit's, into some upper region, whither we stumbled in pursuit. A candle-end, dimly flickering in the corner, revealed our conductress in the person of a girl of about fifteen, attired in a thick white robe which covered her from neck to foot, and seemed, so far as I might presume to judge, to be her only garment. The large sleeves were turned back to the elbows, as if she had been engaged in household work, and the inaudibility of her movements was accounted for by her feet being bare. A broad white fillet tied back immense masses of dark brown hair. The face! Boy as I was, and a very sleepy and exhausted one—I was roused at once into a state of stupid ecstasy by one glance at her marvellous beauty. "Is it a woman? Is it a woman?" I remember gasping as it were to myself. And as she stood, for a few seconds, motionless, her form and dress like sculpture, her white arms extended towards me in questioning surprise, I felt as if it would be no sin to fall at her feet, in adoration of what seemed more of Heaven than earth.

mistress, had broken one, and received a box on the ear, delivered without any ceremony whatever. Zell was evidently as impulsive as she was beautiful. Presuming on her immense seniority of four years, the young lady made no more account of me than if I had been a kitten.

The room we sat in, and a little nook above, where Zell slept, were, like herself, scrupulously clean : all the remainder of the mansion being apparently given fairly over to decay and dirt. Our slender meals were prepared in the sitting-room, and provided from a daily sum, of I should think about fourpence-halfpenny, doled out by the lord of the mansion before leaving. My lady would instruct me where and how to invest this capital to the greatest advantage, and, according to my success, reward me on my return with a radiant smile, or a sounding box on the ear.

Mistress Zell seldom making me the recipient of her thoughts and words, it was by slow degrees that I learned the following particulars : That my host, Mr. Moses Jeremiah Abrahams, was a gentleman of habits so penurious, that he might have rivalled, if not eclipsed, the most illustrious misers of the age, had he only possessed anything to hoard. That Zell was dressed as I beheld her, to preclude the possibility of her going forth—to incur expenses—in the public ways. (As, sitting on the ground, while she told me this, I looked up in my lady's glorious eyes, it struck me that the old man might have had a tenderer reason.) That Mr. Abrahams, absent, most days, till dark, was, on certain days, later still. Finally, that I

must not be surprised if, on one or more of those days, I heard his signal on the window-sill, but not himself on the stairs. "And *woe* to you!" concluded my lady, threatening me with her little hand, "if you betray our secret!"

"Our!" My heart turned faint, I caught her meaning instantly, and experienced the first burning touch of jealousy. My mistress had a lover.

"What makes you colour so, you stupid foolish boy?" said my lady, half-laughing, half-angry. "Can we trust you, or can we *not*?"

I stammered some nonsense about being at her command, body and soul. And I have no doubt I meant it.

My devotion was soon tested. That very evening (one of Mr. Abrahams' late ones) a knock, like his, sounded on the window-sill. Zell, bidding me follow, flew down stairs, and softly opening the window, was clasped in the embrace of an individual to all appearance as ragged and infirm of mien as her grandfather himself.

For a moment she suffered this, then drew back, leaving the visitor her hand, which that monster, whoever he was, seemed to devour with kisses. There ensued a whispered conversation, during which I observed that the speakers referred to me. Then, as if alarmed by a signal from without, the stranger vanished. We returned up stairs.

Next morning my mistress gave me a note without address. I was to take it to a particular shop, and give it to a particular stranger who would accost me. No particular stranger was there. Afraid to return

without fulfilling my mission, I was lingering over some trifling purchase, when a phaeton dashed up to the door, and a gentleman entered the shop. He was very handsome, wore thick black moustaches carefully curled, had long gilt spurs, and looked like an officer. He was well known to the shop-people, for he tossed about a number of articles, laughing and jesting with the mistress, but purchased nothing. Could *this* be my man? I managed, at all events, to let him see what I was carrying. We left the shop together.

"Toss it over. Quick, my lad!" said the gentleman, sharply. "Take this, and *this*" (he gave me another note and half-a-crown), "and meet me here to-morrow."

I told him I did not want his money, but would take his note. He looked at me, uttered a long low whistle—expressive, I take it, of astonishment—and drove away.

The joy in my sweet mistress's eyes, and a white hand stroking my curls, even while she read the letter, were a sufficient reward. Then she made me her confidant. Her suitor was Lord John Loveless, son of the proud Earl of St. Buryans, with whom, owing to some little financial misunderstanding, poor Lord John was, for the moment, on terms so far from satisfactory, as to render it improbable that the earl would yield anything like a cordial assent to his son's union with the granddaughter of an impoverished Jew. Hence the necessity for those clandestine interviews, which my mistress atoned for to her conscience, by sternly forbidding her lover ever to cross the threshold.

My lord was at the shop next morning as soon as I. He took me familiarly by the arm.

"Come and take a pull on the river, boy. I want to have a talk with you."

It was not far to the river. We got a boat and pulled off, my companion chatting pleasantly enough. At last he said :

"That old governor of yours keeps you pretty short, I take it? What does he do, now, with his money? Do you never hear him counting his guineas? Come!"

I positively denied it, and gave such candid reasons for my conviction that he was all but a pauper, that my companion seemed staggered. He became grave, not to say morose, and the row home seemed to bore him. I did not report to my lady all that had passed between us; I could not have left out his bad spirits when I described to him her poverty, and that might have pained her.

After this, my lord's visits became less frequent, and my mistress's smiles rarer. She moved about with a slower and a sadder step; and sometimes sat with her marble arms crossed on her lap, until I almost doubted if she lived. At which times, I would creep into the field of her eye, if but to change its fixed expression.

A terrible event came to rouse her. The old gentleman was brought home, one night, dying. He had been hustled, knocked down, and robbed, by some miscreants in the street. Though he had sustained no injury that should ordinarily prove mortal, the shock to his system, and, still more, the alleged

robbery, to which he perpetually referred, combined to give him to the grave. In spite of medical efforts, he sank fast, and, at midnight, died.

My mistress, who had never left his side, bore all with a strange patience. I never saw her weep, but her white face and gleaming eyes struck me with awe.

A will, duly executed, was found, in which the old man, in general terms, bequeathed to his granddaughter, Zeruiah Abrahams, everything of which he should die possessed, appointing one Lemuel Samuelson guardian and executor. What money the old man had about him, when robbed, was never known. All the coin in the house amounted to no more than sufficed to pay the medical attendant, while the furniture was probably not worth more than twenty or thirty pounds. Part of this, with the assistance of a neighbour, we sold, to spare the old man a pauper's funeral; the rest, we thought, would provide clothes for Zell (since we must *both* now go out and feel our way), and support us both until we found our way. When this was done, the house looked desolate and wretched enough, and my poor mistress scarcely less so. Though she never spoke of it, the desertion of her lover—of whom in all that distressful time we never heard—cut her to the heart's core.

One day, before her clothes came, as I was moving restlessly about the room, thinking what I could say to comfort her, she suddenly lifted her head:

"Charley, will *you* desert me, too?"

"Zell! '*Desert* you!'" Like a young fool, as I was, I burst into a passion of tears.

"Don't—don't! My dear child—my good ch——"

And, infected by my tears, poor Zell laid her head on the table and wept aloud.

Almost at that moment my eye was caught by an urchin in the street, beckoning eagerly. Stammering some excuse, I ran out.

"Gem' giv' me a bob," said the boy, "fur to say as he's a waitin' at the corner."

At the corner, or, more correctly, *round* it, stood Lord John Loveless.

"Now, my boy," said his lordship, very hurriedly, "I am here at great risk to—to myself, and have only a moment to stay. About your mistress? Is she well? Is she cared for? Did the old fellow *really* die a beggar?"

I replied, that the old gentleman had neither lived nor died a beggar, but that we had no money, and intended to feel our way towards work, as soon as we could go out.

Lord John seemed struck at this, and made an irresolute movement in the direction of the house.

"Won't you come in?" I forced myself to say.

"N—no," was the reply. "I can't. Urgent business elsewhere. See, boy. Give her this. Say I have been absent with my regiment, or I'd have sent before."

And, if ever noble gentleman skulked away, I think Lord John did.

Kneeling at my sweet mistress's feet, I faithfully recounted the interview. Zell listened, without once removing her eyes from mine. Then she said: "Put his—his wretched alms—into a cover, and take it to the address I shall write." All which was duly done.

But the events of the day were not over. As we sat, towards evening, discussing projects for the morrow, a stranger somewhat peremptorily demanded admittance, and, in company with another individual who had apparently been lurking aloof, produced some papers, and declared himself in possession of the house. He was our landlord. Our rent was deeply in arrear. His applications and threats having been alike disregarded by the eccentric Mr. Abrahams, he had taken the necessary steps to resume possession, and now came, inspired with an intense hatred (as he openly declared) for all Jew tenants, to enforce his rights.

It was in vain to remonstrate. We had not one shilling in our possession, and, for furniture, only our beds, chairs, table, and cooking utensils: all which, united, would not have paid half the debt.

"At least, sir," said my mistress, "you will not turn us into the streets *to-night*?"

"Well!" said the fellow reluctantly, "hardly *that*. But I'm up to these dodges, *I* promise you. Let you stay, and here you *will* stay. We'll stop that game. Without beds and window-sashes, you'll soon be ready to go. Collect the traps, Bill Bloxam, and look alive."

"It will soon be night, sir," said Zell, pale as a ghost; "a night that promises to be both cold and wet; in charity, leave us the protection of windows."

"Pin up your petticoats," returned the landlord, coolly. "*Here* she goes!"

He roughly tore at the window-sash. Out it came, crashing. But the rotten woodwork at the side, de-

prived of its support, and yielding as it seemed to some pressure from within, came away also. There was a heavy rushing fall that shook the very house—a rolling, ringing, spinning, settling down. From end to end, the apartment was literally carpeted with *gold*!

“Phsh!” said the reeling landlord, as he wiped the dust from his eyes.

My mistress was the first to recover composure. A watchman, on his way to night duty, attracted by the crash, stood opposite. She bade me call him in, and, dismissing the now subdued landlord, procured a trusty guardian for the night. My mistress also despatched a special messenger in quest of Mr. Lemuel Samuelson, who, arriving with the dawn, joined us in further investigations.

Two thousand seven hundred guineas had been scattered on the floor. In different parts of the house, generally crammed into chinks and chasms of the decaying woodwork, were bank-notes to the amount of thirty-two thousand pounds. But even *that* was a trifle compared with the crafty old miser’s foreign securities, which, disinterred in one lump, represented the immense sum of two hundred and ninety thousand pounds.

“And now, my love,” said Mr. Samuelson, when both search and calculation were exhausted, “you will give Mrs. S. and me the pleasure of your company, at my little box at Sydenham, until you decide what *next* to do.”

My mistress at once assented. Since the discovery of the treasure, she had had intervals of the deepest

melancholy. Was she thinking what *might* have been had the old man been less reticent? She had hardly addressed a word to me, and, until Mr. Samuelson came obsequiously to hand her to the carriage, I knew not if she would even bid me farewell. At last it was her guardian himself who drew her attention to me, by asking if she had any directions to give the "lad."

"The lad," repeated Zell, abstractedly.

"Call at my office, boy!" said Mr. Samuelson, who seemed impatient to get away. "By-the-by, what's your name?"

I made no answer. I was looking at my mistress.

"Sulky, eh?" said Mr. Samuelson. "Worse for *you*. Come, my love."

"Charley! Charley!" said Zell.

Then I *could* not answer. She waved her hand towards me, but her guardian led her away.

All that day, I sat at the window, as though I had fully expected her to return; but, in reality, I had no such idea. I knew that my darling mistress was gone—for ever, ever, gone—and had taken with her all joy, all happiness, all desire of life. I was conscious of a sense of hunger, but had no heart to look for food; at the time when we used to prepare our supper on those happy evenings, I crept to my lady's little bed, and lay down *there*. A curious rushing sound was in my ears, and my pulse seemed rather to give a continuous shudder, than to beat. Dreams came without the introductory ceremony of sleep. I heard myself shouting and struggling. Then, darkness. . . .

I awoke in my father's house. I had been there

three weeks. Though very weak, I was in the path of recovery, and was soon in condition to return to school. But not to Glumper's. No.

I learned that, in my delirium, I had given a clue to my name and residence. What after-communications I made, I cannot say : I only know that both my mother and my saucy little Agnes were as familiar with the name of Zell as my own daily thoughts were. She was my love, my queen, my darling only mistress. In that faith, and in the firm assurance that I should one blessed day see her again, I grew to manhood.

There was a grand ball at Dublin Castle, at which I, a young lieutenant of dragoons, chanced to be present and abetting. The reception was more than usually crowded and magnificent, it being the farewell of a popular lord-lieutenant.

As the latter moved about among his smiling guests, he halted at a group beside me.

"Well, young gentlemen," said his excellency, "who is the successful knight? Surely this prize is not to escape us all! 'Resplendent beauty—sweetness—accomplishments—twelve thousand a year. Shame to Ireland, if this Mexican belle quits us to-night, her last in the land (for I hear she returns to Mexico), a disengaged woman!'"

"She will *not*, my lord," replied Colonel Walsingham.

"Hah! Who wins?" asked his excellency, hardly less interested than if he had himself been a candidate.

"That is doubtful still," put in young Lord Goring.
"Hawkins, Rushton, O'Rourke, Walsingham, St.

Buryans, my humble self, have all been 'mentioned in the race—St. Buryans for choice."

"Why so?" asked his lordship.

"The lady has been seated this whole evening beside St. Buryans' lady-mother," said Goring, in a low voice. "And she's the cleverest woman at a finish in Christendom—or Jewry either."

"You said it would be decided to-night?"

"Thus. The young lady will dance but once, the last dance. We have all solicited the honour. She reserves her choice. It has been agreed to accept the augury. Your lordship understands? The unsuccessful withdraw."

His excellency nodded, smiled, and passed on.

A few minutes later, a movement in the room drew my attention. All eyes seemed directed towards one object. Up the centre of the room, leaning on the arm of Lord John Loveless, now Earl St. Buryans, was passing my beautiful mistress! Taller—fuller, no whit lovelier, for that could not be. She looked full in my face. I thought she paused for a second. No, the superb brown eyes were languidly withdrawn, and, without recognition, she moved on.

The last dance was announced from the orchestra. As if under a spell, I placed myself opposite to my lady's chair, though remote from it. I saw the rival suitors, with well-bred self-possession, gather round, and each in turn prefer his claim. All were declined. St. Buryans—by whose haughty-looking mother my lady sat—alone remained. He approached her with confidence, his mother greeting him with a victorious smile. Before he could open his lips, Zell rose—

"Give me your arm. I wish to cross the room," she said to him, haughtily.

She *did* cross. She came to *me*. Drawing her arm away from her conductor's, she held out both her little hands.

"Charley, Charley! Don't you know me? I come to ask you to—to dance with me—with your old friend Zell."

We have more than one deer park—but it was from the Scotch one that, on Zell's reminder (she always pretends to be older and more thoughtful than I), I sent my friend Jack Rogers a haunch worthy of a king's acceptance.





LUFKIN ON DAVINGPODGE.

WHEN me and Mrs. Lufkin left Hogsmead for a week's outing, we had no intentions of intruding into any other spear than that in which we was hitherto placed. But, as luck would have it, who should we meet at the "Farmers' Cheerful Encounter," Aldersgate-street, but my wife's cousin, that wild Tom Bowsicold, who we thought was in America!

Tom told us, just—dear fellow—in his hone hover-bearing way, that when Mrs. L. and me had done the Sowhological and the Polly Ticnic, there wur but two more things for to be witnessed in London, one being a lady over the water what, every evening at nine o'clock, rode—pursued by a vultur and a squib—upon a fery huntameable steed (that had been in training for the same for three years), in a manner not for to be often noticed in Rotting Row. Moreover, seeing that the lady's manty-maker every day made a pint of forgetting to bring home any other riding-habit than a narrer waistband—the interest

daily increased, and the house was beseeched by multitudes who had scruples against what Tom called the "regular" drama.

As Mrs. Lufkin, in language rather stronger than I should perhaps put up with, except on an outing, refused to have anything to do with that lady, Tom informed us that the alternative was "Sperrets."

Real sperrets. Tom Bowsicold had known them, in America, fifteen years ago, and could answer for their respectability. It seemed that there lately come over two excellent and worthy gentlemen by the name of Davingpodge, what lived in a complete hatmosphere of sperrets, and found them so difficult to manage, that they was always accompanied by three or four other gentlemen, for to help. No sooner had they arrived, than Tom Bowsicold (poor fellow, he is for ever taking care of other people's interests and neglecting of his own!) called upon the Mrs. Davingpodge, introduced them to his friends, and wrote to all the papers, except the *Hogsmead Weekly Scrutineer*, that they was "come." Some put in Tom's letter, some didn't, but Tom's object was gained, and the name of Davingpodge was familiar in society as a very favourite subject for disagreeing about.

"Wheer was these sperrets appearing?" asked Mrs. Lufkin, rather doubtfully.

"At Willy's his rooms," replied Tom. "But, my dear Susan, let me caution you, and Dan'l, not to apply to these philmy and mysterious unsubstances, the terms you would naturally use in reference to Mr. Buckstone or Mr. Toole. Sperrets may avail themselves of public exhibition-rooms, without descending

to the level of the stage. In order to impress this important truth upon the public mind, my friends, the Mrs. Davingpodge have, in the most disinterested manner, fixed the price of admission at one guinea, a sum which must necessarily exclude a considerable number of truth-seekers, but ensures, on the part of them as *does* come in, a gravity and attention befitting the occasion."

"A guinea, Tom!" said Mrs. L., aghast.

"Twenty-one shillings," returned Tom Bowsicold, sternly. "Wheer else, let me ask, can you find a similar exhib——phenomenon? Did any one—I put it to you both—object to paying a guinea for to see the Phossil Child—till the proprietors, finding it was nothing of the sort, liberally reduced the price to Twopence?"

Mrs. Lufkin replied that, having never heard tell of the infant in question, she could not say, but that a guinea was a guinea; that, having no particular desire to witness a "similar" exhibition, it did not concern *her* whether the terms was fair or not. Finally, seeing me a little disappointed, the good soul added that, if the Mrs. Davingpodge would so far recognise husband and wife as one flesh, as to accept a guinea for the two, she would consent to attend. Tom Bowsicold assuring us that he believed his personal influence could effect this arrangement, off we set, in high spirits, for Willy's his rooms.

There was a policeman standing outside who, looked at us—likewise at two or three other parties as was entering—so keenly, from head to foot, that I was inclined to ask him what he meant, when Tom jerked me

on, and, taking my guinea, whispered to a gent in the lobby, and passed us in.

This is exactly what we saw, and what I mean, as sure as my name's Dan'l Lufkin, to publish (if nought else will do it) in the *Hogsmead Weekly Scrutineer*.

It was darkish in the room. The stage, however, was well lighted, and upon it stood a thing like my wife's clothes-press, with three doors that laid open the whole front, excepting three or four inches on each side, and showed us there was nothing within but a narrow seat full of little holes that went all round, a tambourine, a fiddle, a battered post-horn, and a heap of cords. Our admission-ticket said that the audience must be expressly limited to thirty, and we found it very near the mark, for there was only forty-two. Some was walking about, some chatting together, but all very quiet, and looking oddly about, as if they wasn't quite sure whether they had got into the right place, or not. P'raps they hadn't.

Mrs. L. was getting a little nervous.

"Wheer is Mrs. Davingpodge?" she whispered, tremulously, to Tom; "among the sperrets?"

"Here at your elbow," answered Tom, coolly. "How do, Arthur?"

My wife recoiled, but Mr. Arthur Davingpodge, who seemed a nice-looking young gent who was never given enough to eat, bowed, smiled, and walked away.

A friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge then invited any gentleman that pleased to come on the stage and inspect the "preparations." Two gents promptly accepted. One of these looked to be a most respectable elderly householder, with the highest shoulders,

the longest nose, and the closest eyes I ever see together; a sharp hand, I'll be bound. He peeped about him with such a air of not having been there before, that I began to think he *had*. He felt the handles and bolts of the clothes-press, pricked the panels with his penknife, as if he thought a confederal or two might be concealed within the half-inch plank, and finally looked at us under the press, which was raised on trestles, as though he would say, "You're all right in *my* hands, my friends. Catch them a humbugging *me*."

T'other gent, he devoted himself to the cords, examining them through a heye-glass, pulling them across his knee, and handing them down to be pulled at by us, which they wos. Similar to the first gent, there was something in *his* manner that made me think he had either been there before, or had been generally in the showman line—he knew so very well what he was about.

When this was over, another friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge went on the stage, and proposed that we, the audience, should choose two of our "body" for to sit on the stage, keep a heye on the proceedings, and tie the knots which was going to be *huntied*. There was at first a great shuffling of feet, as if *all* was coming forrard, but it ended in nought. Our "body" didn't seem to know its members at all. At last, after a long pause, three gents stepped out, and, hoddly enough, one of the two as remained was the gent with the high shoulders and long nose. The other was a gentleman apparently of Jewish horigin, which nobody seemed to know.

The friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge then made another speech, saying nothing about sperrets, but giving us leave to form any opinion we liked about what we come to see. We thought this very kind and civil, and me and Mrs. Lufkin applauded it with the big umbrella, till Tom said 'that was enough.' After that the two Mrs. Davingpodge, which was so like each other that you couldn't tell which was *most* like, came forrard, and was tied hand and foot, one at each end of the clothes-press, the two gents pulling the cords tremendous tight indeed, and quite puffing with their exertions, so kindly made, to satisfy us that all was on the square.

As far as their legs went, I could see that *they* was pretty fast, but their hands being tied behind them out of sight, I had to take the word of the honourable high-shouldered gent, and t'other gent, that all was as tight as tight could be. The doors of the clothes-press was then shut, one at a time, and secured with a bolt by the high-shouldered gent. It was a very peculiar and hobstinate bolt, and took more than a minute to fasten. Me and Mrs. Lufkin observed afterwards, that, every time the clothes-press had to be shut, this haggravating bolt took longer and longer to fix, the Mrs. Davingpodge no doubt sitting quiet inside all the time.

At last all the doors was shut and fastened, and then came a wonderful thing! At a little square window, in the middle door, we saw a white hand flickering and beckoning! Presently it came out, the fingers, wrist, the whole arm, bare to the shoulder.

"The sperrets!" shrieked Mrs. L., clutching me round the neck in her flurry.

There was a burst of applause, followed by a titter, owing to Mrs. L.'s being overheard remarking to me that, to whatever spear of being the sperrets belonged, she could see that vaccination was practised there.

The clothes-press was now thrown open, and the Mrs. Davingpodge appeared tied as they was shut in. But a gent in the audience having expressed some dissatisfaction about the knots, the friend of Mrs. Davingpodge invited any one to examine the same—whereby there stepped out a dapper little old gentleman, in large blue spectacles, who looked at them for a long time, and then said it was all right, and very wonderful, he thought.

"What's your name, sir?" asked a very stern looking gent in our front row.

"I am ze Baron von——," began the little man. But his voice and manner was so comical that the audience giggled, and neither me nor Mrs. Lufkin could catch the name. It was the same whenever he spoke, so I must call him the Baron von Gigggle.

The Mrs. Davingpodge's friend now asked the baron whether he felt like—which means, in English, didn't object to—being tied up in the clothes-press, between the Mrs. D. The baron hesitated, but, seeing another gent coming, said something that sounded like "yah voale," and got in. The friend then said that the gas must be lowered for this hinteresting hexperiment, seeing that the hintroduction into the clothes-press of a new horganisation habsorbed more hatmosphere. It seemed to us as if the hatmosphere was more likely to

absorb the Baron von Giggle. Howsoever, the baron was tied by the high-shouldered gent in what must have been, from the faces he made, a very hagonising position, and the doors was shut.

Then wasn't there a to-do ! The fiddle, the tambourine, and the post-horn, seemed to be fighting, the tambourine getting punished shocking ; after which, the post-horn jumped out of the little window exactly on the shoulder of the gent of Jewish horigin, who seemed very much surprised indeed, and rubbed his shoulder with a rueful expression that greatly amused the audience. After they'd had their laugh, crash went the clothes-press doors open from within, and there sat the three gents all fast tied—the Baron von Giggle crowned with the tambourine, and the fiddle laid across his knees !

“ Will you please to explain whether you felt any peculiar sensation, sir ? ” inquired the friend of the Mrs. D.

The baron winked, and blinked, and wriggled, and, as well as me and Mrs. Lufkin could make out, replied :

“ I zomzing on my nose felt. Over my two knees, zis fiddle I saw come. My head was wizzled in zingling brishes, like you said—buzz. So.”

Tremendious applause, in which I could hear Tom Bowsicold at work with our big umbrella. After which, a circle was formed in the very middle of the room, the Mrs. Davingpodge in the centre, tied in a chair, and the lights put out. We was in total darkness, which was only to be expected, seeing what a lot of sperreted hatmosphere our forty-two horganisa-

tions must have swallowed ! We was told to take hold of hands all round, so as to prevent any confederals getting in—which, unless there was confederals among the forty-two horganisations, they couldn't—when the Mrs. Davingpodge untied themselves in the most obliging manner—as easy as I could lace my boots—flung the fiddle and the ropes about over our heads, rubbed phosphorus (that wouldn't glitter, being bad and apologised for) upon a guitar, to show how it was carried about in the dark, which it might or mightn't. Then the friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge getting on a chair, informed us the phenomena was done.

Not quite. For the same unsatisfied gent as had asked the Baron von Giggle for his name, got upon another chair, and observed that, without meaning any disrespect to the Mrs. Davingpodge, if the phenomenon was done, so was *he*. He had come to see the sperrets. Wheer was they ?

The friend of the Mrs. D. said he could only refer the honourable unsatisfied gent to the card issued last Tuesday, in which, in deference to some strongish hobservations of the English press, and the council of a friend heminent in littary circles—Mr. Thomas Bowsicold—the word “Phenomena” had been substituted for “Sperrets,” and the public further authorised to call them what they pleased.

“Yet,” persisted the unsatisfied gent, “by himplication, at least, you refer these phenomena, as you now call them, to something beyond what we know of nature.”

“We calls it a hunrecognised law of physics,” says

the friend of the Mrs. D. "The Honourable Baron von——"

"Psha! 'Baron!'" returns the unsatisfied gent. "Keep to the pint. You call it a hunrecognised law of physics. Why don't you, if the words reason, common sense, fair dealing, philanthropy, have any meaning at all with you, help us to 'recognise' this law, by telling us all you think, feel, and know, of its wonderful operations? The interest would not be diminished, nay, it would augment with the progress of inquiry. Not only would guineas flow in freely, until Willy's his rooms could not hold us, but the Mrs. Davingpodge would be handed down to posterity as a great scientific name, and as two of the most honoured and honourable pioneers in the most difficult path of inquiry. So, tell us all about it."

"There is one pint the honourable gent has overlooked," says the friend of the Mrs. D. "Our card, lately hissed, says all our necessary conditions must be complied with."

"Well, sir?" says the unsatisfied gent.

"The condition we find *most* necessary," returns the friend, "is this: That nobody asks no questions. Turn off that gas!"

"Well, Dan'l, what do you think of my friends?" asked Tom Bowsicold, as we walked away.

"That the Mrs. Davingpodge are not the worst jugglers I ever see," says I, "nor their audience the greatest fools."



AN INTERESTING YOUNG PERSON.

JOHN never deceived me but once. It was when we were staying in town. We had been dining out, and, on returning home at night, John suddenly stopped the brougham at (of all places in the world) the top of Saint Martin's-lane, saying he would walk the remainder of the way, and smoke his cigar. I remember he had on a peculiarly rough old coat, my aversion, over his dinner-dress, and also that he wore his worst hat.

He did not come home till half-past one !

I was up before him in the morning, and seeing this coat in the ante-room, which was already redolent of tobacco, took it up to put it in the hall, when out fell a little printed bill. There was a woodcut at the top, representing two horrid men, very scantily attired, squaring at each other with hands nearly as big as their heads ; and the bill announced that Bigge Brooser, the celebrated champion of the catch-weights, and Jack Whopler, of Preston, had kindly consented

to "set-to" on the occasion of Mike Maggles's benefit, when a delightful treat might be confidently expected.

This is the reason that John's cigar took two hours and a half to smoke!

We left London. Once more in our sweet quiet village, and much occupied with my darling Tiddlepops, from whom I had been separated nearly three weeks, I had almost forgotten the circumstance above mentioned, when I happened to go into the library to see what new books John had ordered. I declare I think he pricks off the first half-dozen on the list of new publications, and takes his chance. Two works on India; one on the Arctic regions; "The Booby Brothers," by Lady Selina Phiskin; "Over Yonder," by the Honourable Rufus Wiggles, of Alabama, with portrait of the author in full English costume. Then some pamphlets, then a newspaper, John's favourite, with no fewer than eight columns of what the dreadful editor calls "fistic matter," besides all sorts of extraordinary Answers to Correspondents; such as, "Nosey; Yes." "B.; We should say a milksop." "Phil Bounce; We think you'd better." Advertisements, too: "Alf Bramble invites his friends and admirers to a select harmonic meeting." "Young Phizgig's benefit, complete ovation." "Dozey Buggs indignantly denies, ever refused, fight Porkey Steggars," &c., &c., &c.

I threw the paper aside, and sat down in John's chair to reflect a little. I had something on my mind. For some time past there had been a singular change in my husband's demeanour. He was not ill, for I had observed that his appetite, though capricious, had

by no means failed him ; and he took his usual out-door exercise without much apparent fatigue ; but he seemed anxious, irritable, indifferent to the things in which he hitherto had taken the greatest interest ; hardly noticed his darling child ! He had left off reading, and nothing seemed to have power to distract the gloomy thoughts that weighed upon him, except, strange to say, that very paper which I had just thrown down in disgust ! The result of my cogitations was, that I would never quit that apartment until I had coaxed or wrung from dear John the cause of his melancholy. Hardly had I taken this resolution, when I heard his listless step in the passage. Before he had fairly crossed the threshold, I attacked him :

"John, dear John, what is the matter ? Oh, John, how changed you are !"

"Stuff, dear—changed ?"

"You've something or other on your mind."

"Most people have."

"I've watched you day and night."

"I'm very much obliged to you, my dear."

"And I've found——"

"Found out *what* ?" asked John, sharply.

"That you've lost your usual habits, taken to cigars, acquired a distaste for the nursery ; yes, grown careless about your darling child, our own Topsy-wopsy-pips. If I mention that he has cut another pretty toosens, you look as bewildered as if I addressed you in Chinese. Oh, John, my husband," I continued, warming as I proceeded, "what is the meaning of this fearful apathy ? Tell me, I entreat, I conjure you."

"Don't be a goose, Cissy," was the rather rude

reply. "You'll break your hoop. But, set your heart at rest, my dear; you shall know *all*. I have been for some time anxiously expecting a visitor. Something, I much fear, has befallen him."

"Do you mean an accident in the train?"

"Hem—yes—the train. He promised to give me notice by letter, as he might possibly have a companion, a very interesting young person, of whom great expectations are entertained."

"Who is your friend?" I inquired.

"A man of considerable weight, my dear."

"A public man?"

"Very decidedly so," said my husband, quickly.

"I may say, an extremely public individual."

"Is he a person of property, John? What is the name of his place?"

"His place? Place? Oh, Something Court, I fancy. He wrote the address with his own hand, but I fear I've lost it."

"Dear me!" I exclaimed, "can it be that very dirty card Benjamin picked up in the hall? Here it is, on the mantelpiece. But what an odd hand your friend writes! F. I. D.—Fiddle-court, Por—Por—tugal. Does he live in Portugal, John?"

"His town mansion, my love, is in Portugal-lane, Haymarket, central situation, close to Parliament, the Post-office, and—eh?—in short, a good deal more."

"And here's his actual name—'B. I. G.—Bigge Brooser.'" (I paused a moment, fancying I had heard that name before.)

At this moment Benjamin came in with a letter for my husband. It was in the handwriting of his brother

Adolphus, the vicar of Forlingham : a parish of the same name as our own, which circumstance leads to much confusion of letters.

John skimmed a few lines hastily, then burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Ha! ha! ha! Excellent! Hurrah! Here's the whole explanation. Dear old Dolly! Just listen :

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—The enclosed extraordinary communication having been misdirected hither, was opened by me. The language employed by your correspondent is sufficiently obscure. I can, however, understand that he proposes to set out immediately on a 'purfeshonal toor' in your county—that he has called to mind your invitation to take pot-luck at what he describes as your 'ken' (a word certainly beyond *mine*!), and requests you to knock him up a crib 'anywheres convenient.'

"He appears to be accompanied by an individual whom he terms 'his Novice,' and I regard it as a redeeming feature in this man's rude character that he should evince a tender, almost womanly, solicitude for the unfortunate young creature so singularly confided to his care.

"His charge respecting the airing the Novice's bed, and the preparation of nightly 'swizzle' (some species of anodyne, I take it), should in any case be borne in mind, and his gratified allusion to his protégé's 'condition' (meaning, I suppose, lungs), indicate the removal of some apprehensions on the score of delicacy of constitution.

"It would be affectation to deny that the name appended to this remarkable document—Bigge Brooser—is not wholly unfamiliar to me, nor will I pretend to be ignorant that the letters C.C.W. and B.H. may possibly signify 'Champion of the Catch-Weights, and Holder of the Belt;' but, my dear brother, I should ill perform my duty did I not—hm—hm—affectionately admonish hm—hm—debasing associations. . . . Of the Novice I can say nothing. The situation of this young and interesting creature will be a sufficient appeal to the sensibilities of dear Cecilia. I need not, therefore, recommend him to her generous care—hm—hm—retiring youth—harmless inmate—hm—affectionate brother,

"ADOLPHUS."

"John! John!" I exclaimed, sinking into the chair, "it's a prize-fighter!"

"You are right, my dear; it is," replied my husband, quite coolly. "And then?"

"They always beat their wives."

"On the contrary, their wives are the only people who can beat *them*."

"And all have broken noses."

"Nature has provided that Mr. Brooser's, at least, should be unsusceptible of further flattening."

"They use such bad, strange language. But what I most decidedly object to, is the bringing up of boys to this profession who might not have selected it for themselves. That I never, never could forgive! Think of Tiddlepops."

"Think of a mopstick! It's always a man's own choice. All the laws in the world can't make a man a boxer, nor all the laws in the world prevent it. He's born into the ring, like a poet to Parnassus; pugilism lays a maternal hand upon him, and claims him. He slips into training as naturally as a young miss into dressing her doll. Nobody dissuades, nobody encourages."

"When do you expect this man?" I said, shuddering.

"At any moment. And I am sure I may rely upon you, my dear Cecilia, to receive him with as much affability as your not unnatural dislike to his profession will allow."

I assured John that it would not be for the horrid person's own sake that I consented to receive him at all, but solely for that of the poor young creature

by whom he would be accompanied. In him I already felt an uncommon interest. I pictured to myself the pretty (I was sure he was pretty), fair-complexioned boy, with golden curls, clinging like a tender parasite to an old gnarled oak—gentle object of those caresses, that affection, which the rough giant, his singularly-chosen protector, lavished upon him, alone of all the world! I wondered what was the youth's name. I asked to be told his story.

"It is a melancholy narrative, my dear," said John; "but, since you insist upon it, know that this lad's papa was carried off, one morning, by a complaint in the throat, with such fatal suddenness, that the suspense, altogether, lasted but one hour. His mamma, having, I regret to say, a taste for strong waters, was offered a situation as workhouse nurse, but (in spite of the qualification I have mentioned) proving neither savage nor decrepid enough for that office, was quickly turned into the streets, where she was found lifeless beside a pump, having drunk from it in her despair. Mr. Brooser, noble-hearted fellow! saw and loved the boy. They are inseparable, at least—hm—for the present."

It was, indeed, as my husband had observed, a truly pitiful tale. John saw that I was moved, and, probably thinking it a good moment to leave me to my reflections, kissed me, and went out for a ride.

If the boy could only come without Brooser! But that might scarcely be. John said they were inseparable. After all, the man might not be so very rough! I heard the tramp of John's horse in the carriage-sweep. He would be back in a couple of hours, and

it was the most unlikely thing in the world that Broosy-poosy should come as soon as that. I found myself talking aloud, and addressing my darling, whom nurse had quietly brought in.

Nurse had been dismissed to her dinner, and I was attempting to give Tiddlepops his first lesson in writing (it was a kind of messy thing, that hit his fancy exactly), when Benjamin entered and announced—

“Please, ’m, a person.”

“Who is it?”

“Please, ’m, he wouldn’t give no name. I told him master was out; but he said the ‘missis’ would do. I was to say ‘that party,’ and you would be fly.”

“D—do you think, Benjamin, he would like to call again?”

“Please, ’m, I wouldn’t like to ask him. He’s a settin’ in the ’all.”

“Does he want your master very particularly?”

“Yes, he do, ’m, very. He were to have gone to Captain Bishops; but that gentleman’s out a otter hunting; and the person he don’t know where to take that other party which is ill. He wants some medical advice, the person do, for the party; and likewise a mug of beer for the person himself.”

After all, perhaps he was a kind-hearted monster—an honest, right-minded ruffian. Could I consign such a man to the kitchen?

“I hope not, ’m,” said Benjamin, who caught the last word, half uttered, in my bewilderment.

“Well, then, the housekeeper’s room?”

“How’ll Harriet like it?” said Benjamin, gloomily.

Something had to be done. The creature might be already exasperated at the delay. Then there was the Novice to be considered. The child might be seriously ill, and no "medicual" advice but John's was at hand. I resolved to make the effort, and, drawing Popsy closer to me, desired Benjamin to show the stranger in.

There was a step in the passage that made the house sensibly vibrate. The door opened.

"Mr. Brooser," said Benjamin, faintly.

Thereupon entered an individual whose stature I should rather under-estimate at six feet five. He had a large level countenance, like a teaboard: the original flatness of his nose not having (contrary to John's theory) preserved it from a further depression, the result of one of his many battles. The lower jaw was of enormous size. His hair was cut very close, as if he had just come out of prison.

"Servant, 'm," said Mr. Brooser, bowing, and closing the door, with one and the same curvature of his gigantic frame.

"G—good morning, Mr. Brooser. Pray take a chair. I am sorry to say that my husband is from home, but I hope you will await his return. He cannot be very long.

"Thankee, mum," replied Mr. Brooser; "sorry to ill-convenience. Fact is, I don't know what to do about that other party what we knows on. I'm in a regular fix, I am."

"What party, Mr. Brooser?"

"Why, that 'ere Novice o' hourn. What else *could* I be a thinking on?" said Mr. Brooser, with some severity.

"True, very true!" I exclaimed. "That is the very person of whom I am so anxious to hear the most minute particulars."

"Nat'rally," rejoined my visitor. "You must know, then, that his inside——"

"I beg your pardon, sir; for the medical part of the story, I think my husband——"

"Oh, 'tain't nothing particular, only you wanted for to know everything about him; consequently, as his insi——"

"Mr. Brooser, may I not offer you some refreshment?"

"No, thankee, mum; thankee kindly all the same. So, this is the babby I've heard on? Well, now, I don't know as I ever set eyes on a much prettier kid than that 'ere!"

I began somehow to like the man better.

"He is considered pretty, Mr. Brooser."

"He's better than pretty; he's musc'lar. Wot's beauty to bone? Bless his little fistes! Now, lookee, that's good fiber. If there was infant veights, I'd stand a pony on that very fiber, and I'd land it, easy. But, as I was saying, this Novice o' hourn, his in——"

"I am sure, Mr. Brooser, you will find it very dull waiting for my husband. Would you not prefer taking a little walk in the iron-works, and coming back when you're tired?"

"Thankee, mum, I never *was* tired," said the obstinate man.

"You are quite sure you'd rather not go out?"

"Well, no, mum. To tell you the truth, you are so kind to me, a real lady, that's what *you* are," said

Mr. Brooser, looking at me critically, with his head on one side, as if examining a curiosity; "and it's so seldom a rough chap like me gets welcomed to a droring-room and made s' much of, that, if it don't ill-convenience the party present, I'd rather stop here. I know they're bellering for me down yonder at Brynmawr, but I ain't in the humour for a spar. *Let 'em beller.* A man can't be always a punching of heads. I wish he could! Now, here's the pint what *we* have to consider. About this 'ere Nov——"

"I am sure my husband will be rejoiced to find you here, Mr. Brooser," said I, a feeling of despair coming over me, "but I fear he will be somewhat late. We dined early, and I am now going to tea. Of course you don't take tea?"

I give the excellent champion the highest credit for having succeeded in banishing from his broad face every token of that disgust which must have possessed his soul at the mention of the beverage.

Mr. Brooser replied, with astonishing mildness, that he did not habitually take tea. That he had indeed tried it, with a toss of the best brandy for to give it a flavour. But, forasmuch as folks with strong stomachs seemed not to mind it, and he himself had no objection to look on, he would, if it wasn't a liberty, join me at the teaboard.

Of course I acceded, for, in spite of his rough, uncouth manner, there was a natural politeness about the man that pleased me, and rendered my efforts to play the hostess much easier. I ordered Benjamin to place wine and spirits on the table, and we were about to sit down, when our neighbour, Mr. Augustus Littler,

put his head in at the door. He started when his eye fell on my colossal companion, and seemed half disposed to retreat.

Mr. Brooser saw his hesitation.

"Perhaps," he said, "the gentleman is timid-like. Walk in, sir."

I hastened to confirm Mr. Brooser's invitation, and added, that this was Mr. Brooser, of whom he must have heard.

"Well," said Mr. Brooser, in a half-aside, "I have seen a bigger, and now here's a Littler! 'Do, sir?'" continued the champion, standing about ten feet from Augustus, leaning very forward, and presenting his tremendous hand, a portion of which Augustus accepted and tried to shake, but couldn't.

At the repast which followed, Mr. Brooser was persuaded to take a glass of port wine and a biscuit. He was evidently on his very best behaviour, and determined to comport himself in accordance with the most approved drawing-room traditions. He was easy and conversational, and appeared for the moment to forget even the Novice.

"Thankee, mum, another glass, since you *are* so pressing. Towards your health. Likewise, Mr. Littler, I looks at you. This 'ere's good swizzle."

I shall not attempt to recall the whole conversation. Professional topics were, by mutual consent, avoided, and the champion might have passed for a harmless traveller who had never seen a doubled fist in his life.

One circumstance I must record. Mr. Brooser wore on one of his mighty fingers a gold ring of propor-

tionate dimensions, which somehow attracted my attention. Aware of this, the champion exhibited the ornament so obtrusively that, to be civil, I begged to examine it more closely.

The ring was tight, and the process of detaching it ingenious. Mr. Brooser first wetted his finger with the tip of his tongue, then, taking a dessert-knife, insinuated it beneath the hoop, and fairly prized it off. That effected, with a degree of delicacy I had not expected, he filliped the ring once or twice along the hearth-rug, that it might dry, and finally presented it to me in a tablespoon, as if it had been an oyster.

It had a device of two individuals, with little round bodies, crowned with little round heads, fighting.

“That,” observed Mr. Brooser, in explanation, “is the device of the Qui Quæ Quums.”

“The what?”

“The Qui—Quæ—Quums,” repeated my guest, slowly and distinctly. “You would ask me who they ayre. That you can’t know,” continued Mr. Brooser, about to wink, but stopping himself cleverly, “till you’re ’nitiated. We meets once a week, a whole lot of us. We dine together. Ladies goes in the gallery. Her most loyal Majesty——”

“The Queen, sir!” cried Mr. Littler, his surprise overcoming his shyness. “Do you mean that her Majesty——”

“If you hadn’t countered so quick, sir,” replied the champion, “you would have heard me remark that the Queen’s Majesty, God bless her, is always the first toast of the Qui Quæ Quums. We elect by

ballot. I've just proposed the Nov—— By-the-by, what's a good thing for the insi——"

"What a very odd name, Mr. Brooser, the Qui Quæ Quums!" said I, clinging in despair to that body.

"Well, it *do* sound queer," replied the champion, thoughtfully, as though the idea had never before occurred to him.

It was now verging upon baby's bedtime, and I sent him off. Augustus Littler, who had scarcely uttered a word, or once taken his eyes off Mr. Brooser, presently withdrew. The latter seemed disposed to remain, and I was thinking of inviting him to go out while I put baby to bed, and examine a beautiful Irish water-spaniel John had lately bought, when Benjamin appeared and announced that Mr. Brooser was required without.

"Who is it, young man?" inquired that gentleman.

"Seemingly," replied Benjamin, rather sulkily, "he don't know himself. He tried hard to recollect his name and couldn't, so I was to say, 'that other party.'"

Mr. Brooser's genteel apathy vanished in a moment.

"I'm blest if it ain't that Novice!" he cried, starting up with a movement that imparted to the whole house a sensation like a gentle shock of earthquake. "Where is he?"

"Your Novice!" I repeated. "The poor thing. I hope, Benjamin, you have not left him standing in the draught. It might cost the child his life! Conduct him instantly into your master's study. There's a nice sofa——"

"I—I—think, 'm," said Benjamin, hesitating, "the gentleman's a little the worse for liquor."

"The Novice drunk!" said Mr. Brooser. "It ain't on the cards." His voice sank gradually almost to a whisper, under the influence of an emotion which interested me still more in the object of it.

"You must be mistaken, Benjamin," I said. "The young man is extremely delicate. He has been ailing——"

"Yes, he have, 'm, at the 'Chequers,'" was Benjamin's reply.

"Drunk! When he giv' me his solemn word of honour that nothing stronger than swipes should cross his lips till I give leave! No, there's many things possible, but this," said Mr. Brooser, gravely and reflectively, "this ain't possible."

"Of course it is not. Pray be calm, Mr. Brooser. You cannot tell what injurious effect may be produced upon your young ward by any sudden demonstration of anger on the part of one he loves and reveres."

"If he don't rewere me now," said the champion, grinding his teeth, "he shall, before he's two minutes older. And him all nohow, already! Oh dear! Oh dear! When the fellow knows he can't carry as much licker as would drown a cockroach!"

I quite felt for the man, and said all I could think of to calm his agitation.

"Such excesses, my good friend, are indeed to be deplored. Still, he is young; and, with the excellent example he possesses in you, may yet grow up to reward your pains and precepts."

"Well, I have taken some pains with him. That's

where it is, you see. Didn't I knock him down fifteen times in one morning?"

"Knocked him down fifteen times! Oh, you mean arguments."

"Yes. They was. Regular floorers. And now to go a trifling with his condition like this here!"

"One indiscretion," I remarked, firmly, "cannot compromise his social condition, as you apprehend. And really, he must not be left in uncertainty as to your reception of him. Remember, Mr. Brooser, he is far from strong. It is quite possible that this debility, and perhaps a little nervousness at being left alone among strange people, may have occasioned the appearance my servant mistakes for intoxication. Pray be satisfied. Benjamin, let a bed be placed in your master's dressing-room. Harriet shall make up a nice strengthening draught, and I do hope that, after a night's careful nursing, our young friend will appear at the breakfast-table quite an altered creature."

Mr. Brooser muttered some sounds like—"It's to be hoped he 'ood." Then added, aloud:

"Would you like to see the Novice, mum? 'Tain't every one that has the chance."

I replied, with a smile, that I was the more fortunate, and entreated him to afford me that pleasure—for, indeed, it was high time that the child was in bed—and we accordingly left the room. There was no one in the hall; but, as we approached the house-door, the murmur of many voices reached my ears, and made me quicken my steps. Benjamin threw open the door, and disclosed a curious scene.

Fringing the rails outside the gravelled space in front, there were at least five hundred people, chiefly men employed in the neighbouring works. They were in a state of the wildest excitement, shouting and scuffling, and were hardly prevented by the exertions of a few stalwart fellows of our own works from invading the terrace. As it was, just as we appeared, a party had forced their way over.

"Where—where is the poor young man?" I asked, anxiously.

"He's among 'em," replied Benjamin, coolly.

"Among them?"

"He would go, 'm. He said they was his nix-my-dolliples."

"His what?"

"And he loved 'em all like brothers, though they've been and bonneted him cruel."

"Brooser, Brooser! The Novice! Where's your Novice?" yelled the mob.

Mr. Brooser plunged head first into the crowd, sending them, like ninepins, to the right and left; I saw him stoop and pick up something that looked like a bundle of old coats, to which was attached a battered hat. He shook this object almost savagely; then, balancing it on end, and giving it a kick to steady it, retired a pace or two, and, waving his hand, announced to me:

"The Novice!"

Never, never in my life, have my eyes rested upon a more hideous repulsive countenance than that of the truculent young ruffian thus presented. His low projecting brow, flat features, and squinting eyes, con-

veyed a mingled assurance of low craft and savage ferocity. He had knock-knees, and these trembled and bent under his tipsy weight, as the creature made a stupid effort to approach us. He had manifestly taken too much medicine of the wrong sort for his internal malady. I recoiled in terror and ineffable disgust.

"Brooser! Brooser! Brooser!" shouted the mob.

"You promised us to spar, you did!" roared a furious voice above the din.

"I did nothing of the kind!" bellowed Mr. Brooser, yet more distinctly. "I cum here on a private wisit."

"With your Novice."

"With my Novice—o' course. I never quits him." (To the Novice.) "Stand up, you obstinate young beggar, or I'm blest if I don't knock you out o' time. As I was saying, I never quits him—leastways, seldom; and I wish I hadn't to-night, though that's rude to say, for I've been 'ansomely entertained by this 'ere kind lady, and do you think I don't like that a sight better than boosing with a lot o' roughs like you, that come here trespassing on private property? I did mean to make a purfessional toor, but I changed my mind, 'cause o' the Novice being nowadays fit. Wot's the matter?"

"We want to see you!" roared the half-mollified crowd.

"Well, you do see me," replied Mr. Brooser, with mild indulgence, drawing up his colossal form to its full height. "You sees me well, I hope. 'Tain't my fault, nor natur's, if you can't. Hook it! Or, if

you've anything more to say, don't stand there out-ragging the lady, but send a depitation."

There was a consultation in the crowd, and presently a rough fellow was pushed forward as spokesman.

"We don't want fur to offend you, Mr. Brooser," said the ambassador; "neither my ladyship. We knows your walue, both on you" (I curtseyed for self and colleague!), "but here's the pint. Will you set-to for a minute with your Novice?"

"Will you? Will you?" shrieked a despairing voice from the crowd.

The champion smiled compassionately, and did not immediately reply.

"Now look," he said at last—"look at what you're a asking. Is that" (he pointed to the limp and cowering Novice) "a chap that Bigge Brooser, champion of the English catch-weights, can knock down in comfort? S'posin' he wasn't drunk, look at his conduct, look at his character, look at his attitude in serciety. Here's a feller, with seven to four upon him, six weeks in training, final deposit paid o' Wednesday, fogles ordered, seconds chose! Yet this highly favioured indiwiiddiwal, in the beautifulest condition (though some says puffy), can so far forget his duty, first to his backers; secondly, to the Thames and Mersey Navigation Company, what purwides the boat; thirdly, to his conscience, as to drink himself into a condition in which six stun seven could make minced-meat of him! Pah! I blush for my purfession; I gives it up; I withdraw into priwate life; and I goes back to Fiddle-court, Portugal-lane, Haymarket, an altered man!"

Emotion choked the champion's utterance, but an immense cheer from the mob replied to this address.

Then the Novice raised his drooping head, and spoke :

"I s—say, gov'nor !"

"Hold your tonge, sir," said Mr. Brooser.

At this moment a man stepped from the crowd, and placed his hand on the speaker's shoulder.

"I want you, young fellow," he said. "I beg your pardon, ma'am" (touching his hat to me). "It don't anyways affect you, Mr. Brooser. You always fit fair, when you did fight. But I was looking for this young gentleman before he went into training. It's for that poaching matter down at Squire Maundrell's. The keeper's very bad."

Mr. Brooser growled that he 'sposed it was all right, but why wasn't he took afore ?

The policeman remarked that nobody called him anything but "Brooser's Novice," whereby he only got knowledge of him to-day, when the young man was too drunk to forget his name.

I have only to add that the Novice has changed his trainers, Brooser being superseded by the warders of the county jail, with every prospect of commencing an entirely new novitiate at Bermuda ; that Mr. Brooser, though much shocked and subdued, remained to smoke a cigar with his patron John, and returned to town a little comforted ; and that neither Persons nor Parties are likely again to invade the quiet precincts of Myrtle Grange.



A HERO MISUNDERSTOOD.

WHenever, in our estimate of public men, we have lapsed into serious error, the only fair and honourable course is to embrace the first opportunity open to us of recanting, in a public, unreserved manner, those misapprehensions into which we have been unfortunately betrayed.

Timour the Tartar—so called, because, of all Tartars of his time, he was decidedly the most tartaresque, has ceased, for a considerable time, to exercise any influence over the public counsels of any quarter of the world. Rarely does his name appear in any leading, political, or city article, save, perhaps, as that of a representative man, the personal embodiment of some governing principle, for which the writer needs a powerful illustration.

Justice is, sooner or later, meted out to every true hero. In the case of Timour the Tartar, it has required whole ages to dissipate the thick veil of prejudice which gathered round his name. It was, in

fact, no later than yester evening that this cloud was finally dispersed, and the character of the very remarkable man in question permitted to shine forth in full splendour.

A good many persons, both male and female (and several horses richly caparisoned), were engaged in rendering this tardy tribute to the maligned potentate, and so earnest were all parties in prosecuting their honourable purpose, that, in the brief space of three-quarters of an hour, the thing was effected, and, amid thundering cheers, Timour the Tartar exalted to that niche, among the brave and wise, hitherto closed against him.

Among the many benefits accruing from the British drama, is that of its causing us to apprehend in a few terse and nervous sentences—illustrated by scenic and other effects—passages of history which, in written archives, seem doubtful and obscure. It is to this vehicle of instruction we were, last night, indebted for more (and more lucid) information respecting the life, character, and times, of Timour the Tartar, than (we will venture to say) could be derivable from any other source. Pages, chapters, volumes, might have been required, to lay down so accurate a map of Timour's very remarkable character, as *we* obtained, before our dramatic intercourse with him had lasted ten minutes! And our astonishment was only equalled by our gratification. Save in dress, luxuriance of beard, a certain (affected) truculence of demeanour, and a habit of wearing three swords, the Timour of reality no more resembled the Timour of imagination, than a wren a turkey.

For, whereas we had regarded the Tartar prince as a wild, furious, unreasoning, blood-seeking tyrant and butcher, we found in him a gentleman of engaging manners, of amiable and confiding disposition, of considerable earnestness of purpose, indeed, yet open to counsel (however unexpected), and suggestions (however absurd): withal, endued with a heart of the highest susceptibility, and the victim of a passion the more touching, because hopeless, and entirely destitute of any rational foundation whatever. But we must not anticipate.

The chequered career of this Eastern prince probably presents no incident that appeals more strongly to the best feelings of our nature than that which introduced him to us last night.

In a tower, built without a roof, about six feet and a half high, and commandingly situated at the bottom of a ravine resembling a nursery for plants of a highly tropical character, languished a little (female) boy, named Agib, or to follow the popular pronunciation, Ajib. Son of a princess of Mingrelia, and with some faint glimmerings of a remote claim to a possible succession to the Persian crown, Ajib had been placed by Timour in what the latter had every right to consider the safe custody of his (Timour's) father. Too confiding prince! Timour the elder, a gentleman by name Ogloz, and wearing a turban of such dimensions that it threatens every instant to tip him over, at once sets himself right with the audience and posterity by taking Ajib out for a walk, lavishing upon him every possible endearment, and, in restoring him to his "melancholy prison," comforting him with the

assurance of very soon bringing him a letter from his mamma.

Flourish of trumpets—martial movement—enter Timour himself, attended by his guard of honour—a lieutenant, and four halberdiers of different sizes, looking intensely like British stablemen, and who must at least have been dismounted cavalry.

After some desultory observations, and despatching the stiffest of the four halberdiers to march against certain evil-doers, and conduct them to the “furfress,” Timour proceeds to cross-question his father as to the safety of the little captive (a fact he could have resolved himself, by simply peeping over the battlements); the dialogue, it is distressing to add, being characterized by, on Timour’s part, an imperiousness of manner ill-befitting the filial relation; on the old gentleman’s, by an amount of duplicity wholly unworthy of his eminently reverend and truthful appearance.

The conversation is at length drowned in an increasing noise behind the scenes.

“I hear the trampling of horse!” says Timour.

We had heard it for ten minutes, and were in full anticipation of what followed—namely, the arrival of several persons on very intelligent-looking horses indeed. At their head rides the beautiful Zorilda, Princess of Mingrelia, attired as Britannia without her shield.

Riding up a hill at the back, for the express purpose of riding down again—there being, to all appearance, no valid objection to keeping the high road—the lovely princess paused for a moment to receive the applause

(started by the prompter at the wing) which deservedly greeted so fair a visitor.

She had, it appears, come from a spot not mentioned in the maps, but evidently familiar to the audience, by the name of "Jurgia." (Georgia?)

With Zorilda, Timour—it is surely unnecessary to add—falls instantly in love. *We should not.* Voluble, yet vague, fierce, yet friendly, Zorilda was an enigma which only a Timour could solve. He, with intuitive perception, at once divined her character, her mission, and her meaning; that is to say, as far as she would let him, for Zorilda, like everybody else, laughs at the beard of trustful Timour.

Why should we preserve the hypocrite's secret? She is no more a princess of Mingrelia than we are. She is the mother of the captive Ajib, and a "Jurgian." Her coming hither, pretending to be captivated with the glory of Timour, is sheer humbug. She wants her son, and, somehow, she will have him.

After some love-passages, during which she at one time menaces Timour with her "javelin" (about ten feet long), and calls on her Jurgians to support her, while at another she professes unreasonable attachment, the lady moots the delicate subject of Ajib, and, heartily endorsing the line of policy hitherto observed towards that injured youth, proposes that, for further security, she herself should, for the future, become his custodian.

Nothing better illustrates the generous and unsuspecting nature of our libelled hero, than the readiness with which he yields to this extraordinary

suggestion. And here, for the present, the conference terminates—Zorilda retiring to the “furtress,” under the fostering care of Oglou.

A pretty little equestrian episode is here introduced. A lovely Succashin — or Circassian — maiden, has engaged the affections of two gentlemen, Messieurs Kerim and Abdallah, who might easily pass for genuine Persians, if they did not more closely resemble Ethiopian serenaders, and who (fortunately for the progress of the drama) can only express themselves in pantomime.

Timour, at first disposed to order the whole party to the furtress, resolves upon a more chivalrous mode of arranging the difficulty, and directs that a combat on horseback shall determine the lady’s choice. Hereupon the champions engage, when Kerim, in spite of the obvious intention of destiny and the dramatist, gets a heavy fall, and, but for the prompt politeness of Abdallah, who lays himself open to a tremendous stab (between the arm and side) and immediately falls prostrate, would certainly have lost all chance of a Succashin or any other spouse. As it is, the magnanimous Timour awards him the palm of victory, and invites him to the inevitable furtress, to receive his lovely prize.

The great scene is now approaching. Treachery is at work within the very furtress itself. Zorilda has fraternised with that ancient humbug, Oglou, who has actually released Ajib, and brought him to his mother. The meeting is less demonstrative than might have been expected, Ajib, especially, taking the matter as coolly as if they had only parted since break-

fast. Zorilda, however, does her best to keep up appearances :

“ My cheeld ! my treasured one ! my golden 'aired butterfly ! Hast thou sorrowed for thy parent ? ”

“ A (ay) mother,” responds the insect apostrophised. “ Deeply A deeply have I sorrowed, and in my lonely dungeon wept o'er days of 'appiness gone for ever gone but *you* ? Have you grieved for your little Ajib, and has my dear old cheeld'ood's nurse, Fati—— Nay, 'old—here's kind old Oglou ! ”

Will it be credited that this venerable person has found time, since we parted with him, to commit two new acts of treachery ? Aware that Timour must sooner or later discover Ajib's escape, he has made a clean breast of it to his son, and, that effected, hastens to the furtress to place Ajib once more out of harm's way.

What is to be done with him ? For Timour, whose character stands out more and more beautifully in this atmosphere of treachery, is already on his way to the furtress for the purpose of “ upbraiding ” Zorilda. After trying three doors, a cupboard, and a drawer, and finding them all locked, Ajib is made to lie on the sofa, where, covered with a large mantle, and sat upon by his mother, he must be, if not safe, at least warm.

Enter Timour and two halberdiers.

“ Geeard the door. On your lives, let none pass. ”

Throughout the trying interview which follows, nothing can exceed the quiet gentlemanly bearing of this much misapprehended man. Looking, with much delicacy, in every direction except the only one in

which she can possibly be, Timour at length demands: "Where is the princess? Speak."

Her attendant intimates that she is on the sofa, overcome with sorrow.

Timour regrets the necessity for interrupting her meditations, but,—

"She sleeps," says Oglou, at a venture.

"Then she must wake," is the stern reply.

There is no help for it, so the princess rises with a start.

"How! Timour here? and at this hour?" (It is about midnight.) "Whence this intrusion?"

Timour the Tartar merely glances at the fact that the fortress is his habitual residence, and, for persons troubled in mind, twelve o'clock at night a convenient hour for entering into their grievances. He then proceeds to upbraid her, and, in his earnestness, is about to sit down upon Ajib. Happily, Zorilda interposes in time, imploring Timour to imprison, to torture, to kill her, to do anything, in fact, except be seated!

A little astonished, but confiding as ever, the noble Tartar allows himself to be enticed away from the sofa, while the indefatigable Oglou, smuggling the boy to the window, lets him down with the girdle of his dressing-gown. This (of course) breaks, but, as the distance cannot well exceed five feet, and the young gentleman is received with a congratulating cheer (in the Jurgian tongue) by a party whose heads are just visible on a level with the window-sill, there is every reason to believe that he falls, and falls softly, into the hands of sympathising friends.

Meanwhile, Timour—totally indifferent to the Jurgian demonstration just mentioned—continues his conversation with Zorilda, and, with all the frankness of a noble nature, confesses that, though he feels himself to be “hated, nay, aborred,” it is his irrevocable determination to pursue his suit.

“Munster!” is the ungracious reply. “My Jurgians will protect their princess.”

Thinking, however, that it might be prudent not to drive even the gentle Timour to extremities, the lady temporises. The succession *must*, in any case, be secured to Ajib.

Timour ponders. “I must have solitude and reflection,” says he.

And, for this, the opportune closing of the act affords a fitting interval.

What might have been the effect upon the destinies of Persia and the world had Timour’s cogitations been uninterrupted, we can only conjecture. A gloomy change has come over his affairs. Zorilda’s threat was not an idle boast. There has arrived from Jurgia a powerful reinforcement—ten in number—comprising, no doubt, every arm of the service, since no two are dressed alike, and Timour—the noble, trustful, affectionate Timour—is beleaguered in that very furtress, imprisonment within whose frowning walls was the severest measure the kind-hearted and much misrepresented potentate ever seems to have devised.

What matter? If he has lost Ajib, he has still Zorilda. And his furtress, of which we now see the external defences, being—as he himself informs the Jurgian army (drawn up about two feet from his nose)

—“impregnable,” it is manifest that the catching of such a Tartar as Timour will be attended with no small difficulty.

The furtress, differing in some respects from fortresses constructed on the system of Vauban, presents the peculiar feature of a moat *inside*, instead of outside the walls; and, upon the whole, has more the aspect of a beaver’s dam than a place of any considerable strength. This, perhaps, accounts for a certain indifference in the manner of the besieging force, who, entirely weaponless, and standing in a loose semicircle, bestow their undivided attention on the public.

There is room on the ramparts for several persons, and from thence, accordingly, Timour, attended by Zorilda, Oglou, and the garrison (consisting of a faithful halberdier) makes his final appeal to posterity. He will fight to the last—and even longer—and, if conquered, burn the furtress, and all within it.

The noble defiance is yet on the hero’s lips, when an incident—unparalleled, so far as we are aware, in the annals of war—comes to terminate the contest. The furtress, just pronounced by its commander to be impregnable, is captured at a single bound by a nameless individual on a skewbald mare, carrying on his saddle-bow the youthful prince, Ajib.

Shrieks—shouts—clash of arms. The Jurgians, breaking up into parties, madly skirmish among themselves! Timour leaps from the giddy height across the moat, and flings himself, armed with several swords, upon the nearest foes. Six Jurgian warriors, and an old gentleman in a wide-awake and a spangled apron, to whom we have not been previously intro-

duced, attack him at once. Four go down before his mighty arm, two more are wounded and give back, when, shame to chivalry! the old gentleman, who has been dodging in the rear, comes behind the victor, deals a felon stroke, and lo! the gallant, generous, too-confiding prince is a corpse!

Peace to the brave! We have redeemed his memory, and laid this brief but truthful narrative, like a garland, on his tomb.





AN UNPATENTED GHOST.

SO plentiful, of late, has been the supply of spectral apparitions, that it is with some difficulty a new phantom, though furnished with the strongest testimonials, can obtain a patient hearing. It will therefore, perhaps, be the discreeter course to fall in with the commercial tone which has been given to the subject, and be content with stating, in reference to the ghost about to appear, that it is wholly unprotected by any patent regulations whatever, and perfectly at the service of anybody who can, by the exercise of legitimate spells, render it correspondent to command.

In the year eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, a gentleman, whose name, we shall pretend, is Gauntrell, though in fact it is nothing of the sort, was induced, by the prospect of excellent perch fishing, to rent a comfortable cottage residence, in a somewhat secluded neighbourhood, a few miles from Abergavenny.

What particular fun there can be in snaring that very abrupt, aggressive, and—when captured—all but

worthless, fish, we cannot divine. Excepting the charm of voracity, it seems to display no characteristic that should endear it to the angler's soul, or be likely to beguile a sensible, middle-aged gentleman, like Mr. Gauntrell, to settle two hundred miles from his natural haunts and home. Habit, however, is second nature, a fact one is too apt to forget, while opening the eyes of wonder at a hero who smokes his cheroot under a heavy cannonade, or a distinguished character (of another kind) who expressly stipulates for pig and prune sauce (and "plenty" of the latter) as his final repast on earth. Mr. Gauntrell had passed his earlier years on the banks of a famous perch river, and the enmity there first engendered between himself and that warlike fish family, had probably assumed something of the aspect of the vendetta, or death-feud, extending even to other streams and districts.

To speak with precision, "Grisewood Cottage" was something more than it pretended to be, possessing two good stories, the upper nestling in an enormously deep thatched roof, half overgrown with creepers and lichen, and an excellent kitchen, sub-terrene on the one side, but, owing to the peculiar formation of the ground on which the cottage stood, super-terrene on the other, with a window looking to the garden. Excepting a door opening into the scullery, there was but one other, that through which a flight of ten steps led up to the hall passage. Let this be remembered.

The rent demanded for Grisewood Cottage was exceedingly moderate—so low, indeed, as to have induced the in-coming tenant to make the unwonted

inquiry, whether something prejudicial to health or comfort might not have suggested the terms proposed.

The agent had smiled.

Why did the agent smile? Because he was a man of some penetration, and saw in his questioner a person who would take the initiative in smiling, if he—the agent—did not, when told what the latter was bound to disclose, namely, that Grisewood Cottage, like dozens, scores, of other desirable dwellings in the superstitious west, had been suspected of a certain amount of—hauntedness.

Mr. Gauntrell did smile.

“Not sufficient, I conclude, to interfere with our convenience?” he inquired.

“Quite the reverse,” was the prompt reply.

“The reverse?”

“Literally so. It has been found of absolute service.”

“You excite my curiosity. Pray be explicit.”

The agent paused.

“Sir,” he said, “I am not only bound, but perfectly willing, to tell you what is the matter with this house, and I could do so in two words. So far, I am in your hands. But, if I mistake not, you have made up your mind, ghost or no ghost, to take the cottage, and I am tempted to ask your permission to withhold the information you have a right to require, in order that you may, unprejudiced by any previous warning, observe the disturbing influence, and probably detect its mysterious origin, for yourself. In doing so, you would not only confer on the landlord a service for which, I am

sure, he would willingly place the house at your disposal for a term, rent free, but would also disabuse the rustic mind in your vicinity of superstitious fancies which are but too apt to influence it."

The shrewd agent had not misjudged Mr. Gauntrell's disposition. Nothing, perhaps, except, it may be, the unexpected appearance of a vast shoal of perch, on the feed, could have pleased him more than such an opportunity. The bargain was at once struck, and the family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Gauntrell, two daughters, a son (a young Cantab, reading, in his vacation, for honours), and four servants, entered into residence.

For about three weeks, all went tranquilly. The locality was charmingly rural, the perch fed like famished aldermen, and the ghost, to say truth, had been entirely forgotten — when, one night, Mr. Gauntrell, who had remained up later than usual writing letters in his study, received an unexpected visit from his footman-butler. Thomas was a cool, intelligent London servant, and had been for several years in his present situation.

"There's something *very* queer below, sir," said the man, in a low, serious tone.

"'Queer?'" said Mr. Gauntrell, the agent's report suddenly flashing on his mind. "What do you make of it, Thomas?"

"Can't make nothing of it, sir, or I shouldn't have troubled you, so late as it is," said Thomas. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind stepping down, sir?"

"Not at all. Who's below?"

"Emma (the lady's-maid) and Jane are sitting on

the stairs, sir. Cook said her nerves wouldn't stand it no longer, and she went to bed."

"Why had you all sat up so late?"

"It kept a coming and a going, sir," said Thomas, "and we was waiting till it was full on, thinking that was the time for you to see it."

"It, man! Is it a ghost?" asked Mr. Gauntrell, as they left the room.

Thomas only shook his head doubtfully, and followed his master down stairs.

"No light?" said Mr. Gauntrell, feeling his way.

"We thought you'd see better without one, sir," was Thomas's reply.

Emma and Jane were sitting, arm in arm, nearly at the top of the little flight of stairs, within sight, and very easy reach, of the study door. All below seemed as dark as night could make it.

"I think it must be gone for good and all," said Thomas, stretching down, cautiously.

Mr. Gauntrell was becoming impatient.

"Come, come," he said, "what is all this about? What have you seen? What do you fear?"

Thus urged, Thomas delivered the following explanation:—

It would seem that one night, about a week after the arrival of the family, as Emma was sitting alone at work in the kitchen, the door standing ajar, she became suddenly sensible of an augmentation of light in the room. Aware that no one had entered, she put her hand to her cap, under the impression that it had taken fire. The cap, however, was all right. She looked eagerly round. Neither fire nor smoke was

visible, nor did any smell of burning accompany the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the light disseminated by her solitary candle had increased twenty-fold !

Seized with an unaccountable panic, the girl, catching up her candlestick, darted from the room. The darkness of the passage caused her to observe that the candle had been extinguished in her rapid movement. She glanced back. The kitchen was filled with a whitish lustre as bright as day !

The cook, who had not yet retired to bed, listened with considerable alarm to Emma's statement of what was occurring in her own domain, but positively declined to descend, unaccompanied by Thomas. It became necessary, therefore, to apprise that gentleman of the circumstance ; and thus was occasioned a delay of some three or four minutes, at the end of which time Thomas, creeping gently down, found all as dark, and to all appearance as secure, as usual.

It happened that Mrs. Gauntrell was at this time in a somewhat nervous and delicate state of health. The servants therefore agreed among themselves that nothing should be said to her on the subject of the phenomenon ; at all events, until it should again occur.

It did again occur within a few days, and at a moment when the cook, Jane, and Thomas were together in the kitchen. On this occasion, the increase of light was so gradual, that it for some time escaped their observation, until Thomas, whose eyes happened to be directed towards a small printed paper affixed to the wall, noticed that the words gradually became legible.

"It's a coming," said Thomas. "Don't be afraid, Mrs. Mortimer; but, when I say 'Now,' blow out your candle. So will I. *Now.*"

Out went both lights. It made no difference in the steadily augmenting splendour. The room became as radiant as though six lustres were burning within it.

For a half minute or so, the awe-stricken servants sat dumb and motionless in their chairs, when the light began to diminish, and, much more quickly than it had come, disappeared altogether.

Another consultation was now held. Mrs. Mortimer, whose courage was scarcely equal to that of the high race whose name she bore, insisted that mistress should be told, without more delay. The counsels of the cooler Thomas, however, prevailed, so far as to give "the thing," as he affected to call it, a still further trial, and this was done.

Twice more had the incident recurred, when Mrs. Mortimer, "wore out," as she expressed it, finally struck her colours, and, on the fifth appearance, Mr. Gauntrell was warned, as described.

It further appeared that, this last time, the light, instead of exhibiting a steady increase, had somewhat vacillated, waxing and waning, withdrawing almost entirely, then returning with greater power, yet never attaining its maximum brilliancy, until, before Mr. Gauntrell descended, it vanished altogether. Such was the history.

The most minute examination of the room, extended to the scullery adjoining, revealed nothing to Mr. Gauntrell that could, in any wise, point to a

solution of the singular phenomenon. The window, secured with one huge strong shutter, offered no perceptible crevice through which even a thread of light could penetrate, still less the mighty flood that had been directed into the apartment. The consternation of the female servants was too genuine to be mistaken. The integrity of Thomas was beyond suspicion.

All that could be done was to be in readiness for the next recurrence of the event; and, for this purpose, Mr. Gauntrell contrived an apparatus by means of which he might be warned, at any instant, from the kitchen, of the approach of the phenomenon. This was, next day, continued to other apartments above, for Mr. Gauntrell, aware of the firmness and calm good sense which characterized the members of his family, made no scruple of relating to them, at breakfast, all that had occurred.

By reason of the early habits of Grisewood Cottage, the expected signal, when it was at length given, found the master of the house alone in his study. Hastily telegraphing to his son, who was reading, still dressed, in his own apartment, and joined him in an instant, Mr. Gauntrell descended to the haunted precinct.

Thomas was there, alone. One candle was burning on the table; but, already, its light was overborne by the mysterious glow, and, when Mr. Gauntrell extinguished it, the sole result was to give to the growing lustre a purer and more silvery tone. Clear and lucid as a beautiful dawn, the strange splendour grew into the room, lighting up every speck and crevice

with a ray as searching, though not so warm in colour, as that of noon.

Young Gauntrell rushed to the shutter, and drew it down. All without was pitchy darkness, nor (strange to say) was any portion of the lustre that prevailed within, projected into the obscurity.

In vain did the two cool investigators search in every direction for a possible nucleus of this strange fount of light. It was dispersed, with one uniform power, throughout the room. After the lapse of a minute, or a minute and a half, the radiance began to diminish, first slowly, then rapidly, vanishing, at last, with a start, so to speak, as if some one, bearing a lamp, had suddenly closed the slide.

It would be needless to dwell upon the efforts made by Mr. Gauntrell, aided by his family, to arrive at some solution of this enigma, which, puzzling as it was, they one and all believed to lie within the province of discovery. Philosophical conjecture, no more than material investigation, was able to suggest the slightest clue. Appeal to the agent proved that the phenomenon described was identical, in character, with those which had cost Grisewood Cottage its good name. Still, Mr. Gauntrell did not abandon the hope of dispelling the singular mystery.

The incident began now to recur so frequently that the domestics—Mrs. Mortimer excepted—grown familiar with it, discarded their terror, and even began to regard it as a curious performance, provided for their amusement. Mrs. Mortimer's nerves, however, were not proof against the strain. The kitchen was hers; she was responsible for all that happened

there; and to have this "queer fire" burning when it wasn't wanted, and making her hair stand up, on account of the kitchen flue, was more than cook could bear. As, however, Mrs. Mortimer was an excellent servant, and attached to the family, an arrangement was effected, by which leave of absence would be granted to her for the remaining months of Mr. Gauntrell's tenancy, and her place temporarily supplied. Thereupon, Mrs. Mortimer departed.

Now became manifest the disadvantages of an evil reputation. The party who had been relied upon to discharge the offices of cook positively declined to remain in the house later than nine of the clock, evening. This being attended with inconvenience, she was dismissed in a day or two, and another substitute was sought. The inquiry seemed fruitless. Far or near, no one could be found willing to undertake the culinary department, with residence, at Grisewood Cottage.

During this state of things, a curious incident occurred. Young Richard Gauntrell, who had somewhat over-fatigued his student brain, one day resolved upon a walk as far as Abergavenny, and arrived there, in due course, about noon. In that town there stands a small quaint, quiet coffee-house, of the temperance persuasion, known as the "Greeting Hands," and in the clean fresh parlour of that house there sat, on the day in question, a little old lady, eating bread and cheese. She was a bright and brisk old lady, with clear busy eyes, and a cheek which, though no longer young, looked as if it would be pleasant and comfortable to kiss. That she was also a careful and wide-awake

old lady was proved by her—rather sharply for *her*—reproving another guest who, on entering, had nearly tripped over a bundle she had placed on the floor.

“That’s all the property I have in the world, young man,” said the old dame, “and if you’d broke your nose over it, it wouldn’t have done any good to you or me.”

The guest, admitting that there was an absence of any perceptible advantage to either in such a catastrophe, begged respectfully to ask why it was necessary to place her property quite so close to the threshold.

“Why, to be ready for a start, young man,” was the reply. “I don’t know what moment I may be come for, you see.”

“I think whoever’s coming treats you very bad,” said the landlady. “Here you’ve been, with your bundle packed, and your bonnet on, two whole days.”

“I’m noways impatient,” said the old lady.

“Do you mind my asking where you’re going?” asked the landlady.

“Not I, my dear. ’Tis ’corden as I dreams.”

“According as you dreams!” echoed the landlady.

“To be sure,” retorted the old lady, cheerily.

“We comes of a dreaming family, and we always goes by it. I say, my dear, can I get a horse and cart, if I want a lift, Ebbw Vale way?”

“Yes, sure. When shall you go?”

“When my young man comes. But he’ll be a walking, and p’r’aps he won’t like to carry my luggage.”

"He must be a very devoted young man if he do," said the landlady, laughing. "What's he like?"

"He's a handsome young man, also pale, which I'm afraid he takes too much out of hisself, in pint of study," said the old lady. "He's not far off now."

"Am I the young man?" inquired the male guest, a young farmer of the neighbourhood.

"Hush!" exclaimed the old lady. "I do believe that's him. Yes; he's a coming in. I see him turn."

The next moment the door opened, and Richard Gauntrell entered.

The old dame started up.

"Here I am, young man. I'll go."

"Go!" exclaimed Gauntrell, who, attracted by the appearance of the clean little hostel, had turned in for some refreshment. "What does this good lady mean?"

"You're wanting a cook?"

"Very much," replied the young man, laughing.

"Here I am, sir," said the old lady, tying her bonnet-strings.

"But you don't know about the place."

"Nor don't care," was the answer.

"Character?" suggested Gauntrell.

"Here's a hatful," said the old lady, producing several letters. Two of these the hostess presently pronounced to be from ladies of station, resident in the county.

The young man hesitated. Here was a prize indeed. He felt, however, that the peculiar circumstances of the case should not be concealed, and the guest withdrawing, and the hostess being summoned

away, an opportunity was afforded him of giving the cheerful old lady to understand that there was, in fact, a *ghost* in the case.

"I don't care for no ghostes," was her reply. "I rather likes 'em. When all alone, they gives quite a relish to one's tea."

Under such circumstances, there could be no further scruple on either part. A light carriage was obtained, and the old lady and her long-expected "young man" did really depart in company.

At Grisewood Cottage, it is needless to say, the pair were received with open arms. Mr. Gauntrell had executed a long and successful foray among the perch; but his exploits were completely lost in the splendid fish captured by his son. As for the brisk old lady herself—Mrs. Applebee, as she was called—after a very brief interview with her mistress, she threw herself at once into the heart of office, winning easily the affection and confidence of her fellow-domestics, and demeaning herself altogether as though she had lived in the family twenty years. She had an extraordinary flow of animal spirits, which never seemed to flag, and a pleasant hearty voice, which, constantly as it was heard, never tired the ear.

Now, Richard Gauntrell, in touching upon the ghost, had purposely avoided describing the precise nature of the disturbing mystery, curious to see in what manner it would act upon the apparently fearless intelligence about to be confronted with it. But it had escaped his memory to warn the servants to do likewise, and hence, when, sitting together after supper, Mrs. Applebee suddenly bethought her of the

ghost, and requested particulars, Mr. Thomas at once gave them.

As he proceeded, to the extreme amazement of all, the hitherto fearless old lady turned deadly pale, and lay back, as if gasping for breath, in her chair.

"How—how—often—does he come?" she presently ejaculated.

Thomas did not notice the expression "he," and only answered that the visitation might occur any night—perhaps, *then*.

"Then, my dears," said Mrs. Applebee, presently regaining her looks and smiles, "you do a poor old lady this kindness. Moment you see him—the light, that is—coming, all of you bolt up-stairs like frightened rabbits, and leave me all alone."

Emma drew a long breath.

"Well, you *are* a bold one, Mrs. Applebee."

"'Mr. Greatheart led the way,'" quoted the old lady, with her confident smile. "I'm afraid of nothing He sees fit to suffer in the world."

It was remembered that, while she was yet speaking, the marvellous light began to steal into the room, slowly, this time, as the revealing of an actual dawn.

All looked at Mrs. Applebee—Thomas raising his hand, as if to apprise her of what her less experienced eyes might not have yet detected. The old lady nodded. She betrayed no trace of fear, but as the light increased, her countenance seemed to put on a strange solemnity.

Presently she signed to the door, when the servants, remembering her request, all three quitted the room. Turning at the top of the stairs, Thomas, who went

last, observed that the apartment was filled with a radiance brighter than any they had yet beheld.

For the next half hour, the servants waited quietly in their respective rooms. At length Thomas, becoming a little uneasy, was on the point of going down, when Mrs. Applebee was heard to come softly up-stairs, and retire to bed.

The next morning found her active and cheerful as ever, but uncommunicative as to the ghost. Having got through the greater part of her morning's work, she asked permission to pay a visit to the little village—a mere cluster of the humblest cottages—close at hand, and, tying on her neat bonnet, set forth.

Near the first cottage, she encountered an old woodman, at work with his hatchet on the trunk of a felled tree. Upon this, looking, in her scarlet cloak and straw bonnet, like a bright old moth, Mrs. Applebee alighted, and the following conversation ensued.

After a brief strangers' greeting :—

"Folks very bad off in these parts, master?" inquired the old lady.

"Us, in Duffryn, couldn't hardly buy the Queen a new crown, if the old 'un was wore out," replied the woodman, darkly.

"Poor, are they?"

"Cruel poor."

"But you helps each other?"

"O yes, *we* helps each other," replied the old man, dealing a savage cut at the tree. He seemed weak, and in ill health, and the energy of the action exhausted him, for he sunk the hatchet wearily, and sat down upon the tree.

"Is—is anything the matter?" asked the old lady.

"Hunger and death," said the man; "nothin' more. Never you mind, missis."

Mrs. Applebee started up in a moment:

"But I *must* mind," she exclaimed. "Who's hungry? Who's dying? Tell me, tell me, *tell* me!"

Before her earnestness, the man's sullen mood gave way.

"I'll tell you, missis," he said, "but don't put yourself out for *us*. You can't do nothing."

Thereupon, he related to her, in plain rustic terms, a sad—but not strange—history. His daughter, and only child—the beauty, as *he* called her, of the country round—quitted her honest home—several years before—under the protection of a young soldier, whose attention she had attracted at a neighbouring fair. At the end of two years, the girl came wandering back, wretched, ragged, weary, carrying a sickly child. Her seducer had been ordered on a dangerous foreign service, and, giving her what he could spare, bade her farewell. Her mother had died in the interval of her absence, and her father, falling into indifferent health, was reduced to the last stage of poverty. The desolate home, however, could still offer the shelter of a roof, and to this the wanderer was made welcome.

It would appear that, either owing to a certain haughtiness in the girl's former bearing, or from the villagers having been deeply impressed by the grief of the heart-broken mother, the rude sympathy usually displayed by persons of their class in mutual misfortune, was withheld. The wretched parish allowance was insufficient for support—outside the union walls—

and, what is an uncommon circumstance in our day, no person of superior condition in that vicinity, took any interest in the troubles of the poor. Unaided, or, at all events, unassisted in any effectual manner, the misery of this unfortunate family had reached its height, the father being able only to obtain a few hours' work now and then, as on that day, and that for the most trifling remuneration. In truth they were all but starving.

Mrs. Applebee had listened to the old woodman's narrative with the most fixed attention. When he had finished, she reminded him that he had not mentioned the seducer's name.

"We never knowed it," said the man. "She wouldn't tell. Perhaps it was as well for all," he added, gloomily.

"But his regiment, was it the —th Highlanders?"

"Why, how do *you* know that?" asked the man, roused from his apathy.

"Black hair, dark blue eyes, thick eyebrows that touched?"

"Well, you arn't a fairy, are you?"

"No," said Mrs. Applebee, "I'm his mother."

"His mother!"

"Yes. Now you take me to Alice, and look sharp about it," said the brisk old dame, "for I'm a cooking here, and 've got to be back in a jiffey."

The man looked at her, and led the way. On a wretched pallet, in the miserable hovel to which the family had descended, lay the once-envied beauty of the hamlet, a querulous, desponding invalid, nursing a yet more weakly child.

How the very presence of the comfortable old lady seemed to bring relief and blessing, and how the good creature brought the deserted ones to believe that they saw in her the instrument of a merciful Providence, to help and comfort them in their great extremity, we have not space to tell. The interview, though earnest, was necessarily short. For the time, Mrs. Applebee had to hurry away. Alice detained her for a moment, both with hand and eyes, as she asked :—

“ But how, dear, good woman, did you trace me out ? ”

“ Bless you, my dear, I was *warned* ! ” said the old lady, and trotted away.

That evening, in the study, Mrs. Applebee accorded to the family certain explanations, subsequently embodied by Mr. Gauntrell in the following singular statement, to which we beg the reader’s attention.

In the spring of eighteen ’fifty-five, being the second year of the campaign of Sebastopol, Mrs. Applebee received a letter signed by her son, then lying, severely wounded, in hospital at Balaclava, in which, after declaring his belief that he should not recover, he related to her the whole affair of Alice. Her name and place of abode were, however, left blank by his amanuensis—the young man no doubt intending to supply these important particulars with his own hand. This, either from forgetfulness, increasing weakness, or from some cause never ascertained, had not been done, and Mrs. Applebee was thus left without any clue to the mother and child whom, in the early part of the letter, she was affectionately adjured to seek out and relieve.

It was known that young Applebee had been despatched, among a ship-load of sick and wounded, to Scutari; but here all trace of him was lost. The vessel, half-disabled on her passage, had to put back to refit, and, in this interval, he might have died, as did many others, or it is possible he might have ultimately breathed his last in the hospital ward at Scutari, at a period when deaths were numerous, and the identity of the fever-stricken or unconscious patients often lost and confounded.

One evening, towards the close of that anxious year, Mrs. Applebee was sitting in the housekeeper's room of a large country mansion, near Carleon, of which she had taken charge in the absence of the proprietor. She had had a bustling day, and, overcome with fatigue, dozed, and had a dream. She thought that, while still sitting in her accustomed chair, the room began to fill with a whitish light, which presently grew into amazing lustre, and that, at its height, an impression was conveyed to her, without spoken language, that the appearance concerned her son, and the message he had sent her.

"But what can I do, my dear?" the slumbering old lady had demanded, addressing the light.

An answer was returned, in the wordless manner before described, to the effect that, when the appearance should next recur, the object of it, Alice, would be close at hand.

Thenceforth, the existence of Mrs. Applebee was a condition of expectation, fidget, and dream. Attaching an undue importance to the visions of the night, the good lady trotted about in fancied obedience to them,

no whit discouraged by her frequent disappointments.

One night she had a singularly vivid dream of sitting in the parlour of a temperance hotel, in Abergavenny, and seeing a handsome young man, "likewise pale," said Mrs. Applebee, "who said (don't laugh, 'm, please), 'you're to come and be our cook.' When I saw Mr. Richard" (with a curtesy), "I knew he was my young man."

"When I saw *him*," repeated the old lady, "I knew I should soon see the other (meaning the apparition) also, and shortly find his Alice. I have enough, thanks be to God, to make her comfortable, and so I will, only staying with *you*, ma'am, as long as ever you pleases to want me.

"And now my story's done, and I don't think, my dears—young ladies, I would say—that you'll hear of any more ghostes at Grisewood Cottage."

It is a fact, that they never *did*.





HERMIT BOB.



WONDER what was the correct pattern of the scrip?" said my friend Bobby Lynn, thoughtfully, as we roamed, an idle pair, along the Ladies' Mile.

"Scrip! What scrip?"

"Bag, satchel, wallet, shoulder-thing, you know," said Bob. "Scrip—from the Swedish 'skräppa'—whence we have 'gripe;' in the vulgar, 'grab.' *Any* scrip. Such, for instance, as hermits usually carry for roots, and—and that sort of fun."

"The last new thing of the scrip sort," I observed, "is announced by Toozeley Brothers, of Rose Conduit-street, as an immense improvement on their celebrated Tien-Tont, which already, as its name implies, held everything. Divided, say the Brothers, into five compartments, thus: a place for your dress-boots, slippers, and gibus. A collar-cell. A——"

"Psha!" said Bob: "I mean the regular hermit machine; plain, grave, capacious, water-proof, adapted, in short, to its sober purposes, and the useful and innocent pursuits of the contented wearer."

"Hallo! Are *you* going to turn solitary?" I asked, with considerable surprise.

"Harry," said Bob, "I——Stop. Take a sweep round here. It's quieter. I have arrived at a very extraordinary determination. Although not recent, it is in a manner associated with an incident that occurred under your eyes not ten minutes ago. We met a low-bodied light-green phaeton, drawn by a pair of nice free-stepping things, silver harness, the whole conducted by a lady in a mauve bonnet, carrying on her whip-shaft a delicate blue toadstool."

"I remember."

"As she shot past, and our eyes met, the toadstool sank between us. Noticing this, the spirit of mischief prompted you to remark, with a pretence of ignorance that would have been absurd if it were not malignant, 'I thought you knew Grace Kersmere—that is, Lady Grace Tattershore.' '*Knew* her!' I responded, using my chest-notes. There I stopped."

"All this I accept as history. Proceed."

"I," resumed Mr. Lynn, after a deglutition, as if he had successfully bolted a small apple, "I, sir, was the tenth man jilted by that lady. She was, as you are aware, an heiress, independent of her parents; a circumstance which does not, in practice, fortify the authority of those parties. Grace, in fact, was accustomed to do pretty much as she pleased. Engagements were her monomania. To such a degree did she indulge the predilection for betrothment, that at the period when I found an explanation absolutely necessary, Miss Kersmere was regularly affianced to no less than three individuals, irrespective of a con-

ditional understanding, with a cousin in New Zealand, and an extensive range of general flirtation at home!"

"Did she propose to marry the *three*?"

"I cannot say," replied Bob, calmly. "Perhaps the difficulties of a threefold engagement might have been enough for her. Genius, however, will do a great deal. Accident—treachery, *she* called it—alone brought matters to a crisis. We three unconscious rivals happening to be all in town at the same time, it became expedient to appoint us our respective beats, morning, afternoon, evening. I was myself on afternoon, or croquet duty, when, by the merest chance, happening to drop in, in the morning man's time, I became aware that she was affianced—in addition to myself and Charley Sartorius—to Sir Talbot Tatter-shore—whom, in the perplexity arising from this unlucky clash, she, unintentionally, married. You heard of the singular, not to say preternatural incident, that attended the ceremony?"

"No, I did not. What was it?"

"They were married, by the united efforts of several of the clergy, at St. Winifred's the Less. Just before the appointed hour, a gentleman, not, perhaps, strictly handsome, but of highly prepossessing aspect and demeanour, still more improved by a touch of sadness, accosted the pew-opener with a request for a seat, at a convenient distance from the altar."

"Say frankly it was yourself."

"Ha! Well guessed," said Bob; "but you'll hardly foresee what follows. The pew-opener, after a moment's irresolution, arising perhaps from her knowledge of Miss Kersmere's history, and a fear that I might

attend for the purpose of forbidding the banns—ended by placing me in a commodious pew, but slightly removed from the interesting scene. Scarcely was I seated, when I noticed a second gentleman, evidently preferring a similar request. He, likewise, wore a subdued and mournful air, and the vergeress—probably esteeming us fit companions—led the way to my pew, and introduced into it Jacob Protheroe—the man she was engaged to at Naples! Well, sir, we had barely exchanged nods, when, by Jove! our party was augmented by the entrance of Lord Edward Snitcher, and his long cousin, Tom Preedy, who fought about her at Bruges, and were both pinked—and jilted. Then followed little Contrebasso, the music-master, to whom it was said Miss had given a written contract of marriage. Presently, at the end of the pew, I became aware of the long visage of old Witherspin, of the Blues; and, finally, to crown all, the indefatigable female hitched into the pew a tall ungainly youth, with large ears, blushing to their very tips, whom Protheroe, in a choked whisper, pronounced to be young Quentery, the son of one of Kersmere's Shropshire tenants, whose bucolic heart Miss Kersmere had broken, as the Laureate hath it, 'for pastime, ere she went to town.' There, sir, we sat—the pew-opener standing sentry over us, with a half-pitying, half-disdainful air—as if we had been convicts, or a batch of doubtful sheep in a separate pen. I have often wondered whether the placing us all together in that conspicuous position, when there were scores of pews vacant, was the jade's joke or not! Escape was out of the question, for hardly had young Quentery's left ear shown

symptoms of regaining its natural hue, when its relapse into the deepest crimson announced the approach of the wedding-party. Grace leaned upon her father's arm, looking radiant as the day, and—(shameless flirt and jilt) the impersonation of artless innocence. Whether she regarded our presence as a compliment or otherwise, it was impossible to say. I think I know which party looked most foolish. I am *sure* I know which felt most embarrassed. As Tatter-shore led her from the altar, she suddenly stopped, faced round, surveyed us with one slow, sweeping glance of scorn, dropped a stately curtsy, and vanished. At that moment, a resolution, already flickering in my mind, became fixed as fate. I determined to quit for ever the haunts of a social polity where such treachery as this can be practised without penalty or reproach—is tolerated, smiled at, forgiven. Harry, it is my intention to become, in the completest sense of the word, a hermit.”

“Are you in earnest? A hermit? My dear Bob, in these days——”

“Is an anachronism,” interposed Mr. Lynn, calmly. “I will meet that as I may. But, Harry, an expression that has just escaped you reminds me of a little point. You are among the few who will be ever welcome to my cell. I shall take it as a great favour if you will use a somewhat less familiar mode of address—no recluse (and I have given some attention to the point) having, so far as my inquiries lead, been usually accosted as ‘Bob,’ ‘Bobby,’ or any of the diminutives of that name, which I shall, on the contrary, extend to Roberto—*Fra Roberto*, the Solitary.”

"Rely upon it, old boy——"

"'Old boy,'" interrupted the intended hermit, "is open to the same objection."

"Excuse me. But really, Lynn, this is the most singular resolution. And as sudden as it is strange."

"Strange, if you like," said Bob, "but not sudden. It was my boyhood's dream."

"Very likely. But manhood's reality——"

"I have made it the subject of much anxious consideration," said Bob, "even to the minutest details. My dress, my habitation, my diet, my line of life, my course of meditation. Henceforward—that is from Tuesday fortnight, when I dine with my Aunts Pentwhistle, at Twickenham—I take cognisance of this world exclusively through the loopholes of retreat—or one of them," concluded Mr. Lynn.

"Snug lurking places enough," said I, "though not absolutely warranted against the chance of a splinter in the eye."

"If there be anything ironical concealed in that observation," said Bob, stiffly, "permit me to remind you that there is no disgrace in refraining from a conflict in which you are not specially invited to participate."

"Granted. Should you, however, light upon a friend, in that stage of garrotte which might prohibit his conveying to you that special invitation—how then?"

"That," said Bob, impatiently, "is a particular case. I never heard of shame or discredit attaching to those who have voluntarily quitted the conflict of the world."

"Nor I either. It's a matter of taste and personal comfort. Still——"

"Still, *what?*"

"Why, you see, a man may perch himself on a windmill, beyond shell practice, and very much enjoy a battle. But that gallant example has been rarely found to exercise any beneficial influence on his fellow-men; and, hence, the public tributes (at least, of a gratifying nature) paid to such warriors have been few."

"I don't want any public tributes," said Bob. "The world doesn't want *me*, nor I the world. Society is based on the falsest principles. It is planted in a slough from which all the moral sewerage, perpetually in action, cannot withdraw the noxious elements. The entire fabric being in an advanced state of decomposition, I hope I may be excused for making my bow before I am stifled in its fragrant fall."

"Better stay, and help to reconstruct it on sanitary principles of your own, Bobby," said I.

"We had better part—for the moment—I think," said Bob, gravely. "This is not a scene, (how do, Wopshott?) nor are you (good morning, Lady Dunsandle) in a mood to discuss such matters (ha! Twicken) in a fitting tone." We were now at Hyde Park Corner. "Call in Half-Moon-street, if you think proper, to-morrow," added Bob, "about four, and you shall then see whether I am in earnest, or not."

"Good. This time to-morrow."

"Four, *in the morning*," said Lynn.

which are improvable, for table purposes, by the agency of fire. By-the-by, look at this."

He unfolded a sort of scroll, something resembling that which records the names of the "thousand-and-three" victims to Giovanni's fatal love.

"Here are one hundred-and-thirty-seven distinct methods of dressing the potato."

"It is not the fact, then, that hermits confine their eating to the natural products of the soil?"

"In a crude state, no. The coats of a hermit's stomach are not expressly lined for the purpose," said Mr. Lynn, with some impatience. "I stick to my text. Roots. Well, potatoes are roots. On the other hand, peas, beans—broad and French—asparagus—and a lot besides—are excluded from my larder, simply because they are not 'roots.'"

"A radical defect, indeed!" said I.

"I shall get on very tidily, said the intending hermit. "There are fruits, you know. 'My scrip, with herbs and fruits' (you perceive) 'supplied.' Ah—my friend!"

"I would not rely upon the 'mountain's grassy side' for much in *that* line," said I. "By the way, how about the Beaujolais?" I added, sipping the fragrant fluid.

"'And water from the spring,'" quoted Bob; for the present, however, following my example.

"There could, at least, be no objection to Hermitage!"

"'And water from the spring,'" repeated Bob, firmly ignoring my little jest. "The water in the neighbourhood of my retreat is exceedingly fine—a

light, dry, pleasant, stomachic water, sir. That was one of my reasons for selecting the spot I have chosen."

"You have not told me where it is."

"Let me explain at once, my dear boy," said Bob, "and be you one of the earliest to lift the ever-ready latch of the recluse's cell. There will always be a ham, or a tongue, a grouse-pie, or something of that sort, in cut."

"Hallo, anchorite!"

"For my guests—my guests," said Bob, hastily. "Never shall the famished and belated traveller be chidden from my door!"

"Is the place so wild and isolated?"

"It is in one of the loveliest and most populous of our western counties."

"Indeed! And yet secluded? You are lucky, in these days, to have hit on such a spot."

"Well, it was no easy matter," replied Bob. "Listen, Harry. You consult your Bradshaw. You find that a branch of the great Southland Railway conveys you to Tibbley Junction, from whence you take the eastern portion of the loop-line as far (remember this) as Burngallows. Hence, a short branch conducts you to Bishops-Pyewall-road; after which you have it all plain sailing to Hawbridge. Here, by order, two days before, you can, provided it be not market-day in any of the neighbouring towns, obtain some species of trap to take you on to Chandler's Ford, ten miles and a half. You may then consider yourself at home, since there remains but a six-mile ferry to Sea-Palling, where you first enter upon the

outlying portion of my friend Sir Quigley Quantock's property, in some eligible nook of whose very extensive woods I propose to take up my permanent abode. You understand?"

"Perfectly. Stay—let me see. I take my Bradshaw—and I—humph—my Brads——"

"There's a shorter way by sea," interrupted Bob, "discovered by some Columbus, on his way to Babley-Patterton regatta."

"I think I should prefer the sea way," said I. "Shall you be there in August?"

"Only for the remnant of my pilgrimage," replied Bob, relapsing into sentiment.

"What if you live to a hundred? Hermits generally do. My dear old boy, what upon earth will you do with yourself?"

"My existence," answered Bob, "will be one of child-like innocence. I shall smoke and meditate."

"Without disparagement to those truly infantine pursuits, one must at least be thankful, for the sake of progress, that the general body of mankind are not seized with a similar fancy. But you yourself—without companions—without——"

"Companions!" exclaimed Bob. "What better companions can a thoughtful man desire than the ever-changing, soul-entrancing aspects of nature? The babbling brooklet—the fleecy cloudlet——"

"Portending the stormlet," I put in.

"The—whole lot of meteorological phenomena," said Bob, frowning, "and that sort of thing; such will be *my* associates. They cannot betray."

"I beg your pardon. For treachery and mendacity I'll back your barometer——"

"Psha!" said Bob. "These exhausted, I turn me to my sheltering woods—my neighbour oaks—my—other thingamies—and, fixing my gaze upon some gnarled trunk, I—I shall—*think*," said Bob.

"One mode of taking a course of bark!" I ventured to observe. "But even that source of mental vigour may be exhausted. *Then?*"

"My resolution is unshaken," replied Bob, with a mournful smile. "Out of the world I go—on Wednesday fortnight."

"Well, my friend, I am sorry for this determination, and the more so, as I cannot but feel that the cause is most inadequate."

"I am the best judge of that," said Bob. "Harry—*she* was the only woman I ever loved."

"But, dear old boy, did everybody who is jilted take to the woods, what a sylvan population we should have!"

"I am not influenced *solely* by the—the circumstance to which you, not obscurely, refer," said Bob. "Harry, I am the victim of a noble discontent. I am an ambitious man. Possessed of talents above the average, but rendered infructuous through a certain difficulty of ascertaining in what direction they lie, I find myself condemned to an insignificance abhorrent to my soul. Were I rich, old fellow, all would be well. My abilities would at once command the respect they deserve. But here again I fail. I have six hundred a year. Disgusting income. Of all the peddling little prizes in fortune's wheel, six hundred

a year is the most embarrassing. I wish it were practicable to toss up with the blind goddess whether it should be six thousand or nothing! You're for ever dodging about the tail of it, neither actually *out* of debt, nor plunging honestly *into* it. In embracing solitude, I resign all the dreams of love and ambition. I owe nothing. My very tailor is paid. Disarmed, stingless, he melts into the common herd, and is forgotten. My frame will be covered by two gowns—my other needs, by thirty pounds a year. The residue of my property will accumulate, so as to form a fund which, after my decease, will be devoted to the outfit, biennially, of six hermits, of disappointed views, but irreproachable character. You will allow me to name you as one of the trustees!"

I pressed my friend's hand in token of acquiescence, and, shortly after, took my leave—not (to say truth) without a painful suspicion that the disappointment poor Lynn had experienced had acted more unhealthily upon his mind than his friends were aware.

Engagements prevented my revisiting London for three weeks. I then found Lynn's rooms empty and dismantled. He had, I was informed, sold every individual article he possessed—save only the clothes he stood in and his favourite pipe—and departed, with the packing-case, leaving no address whatever. It was manifest, therefore, that he had actually carried his singular project into effect.

This conclusion was shortly rendered certain by my receiving a letter from the recluse himself. Although I could distinguish the post-mark of Sea Palling, it seemed to have made an extended tour in Devon,

Cornwall, and the Scilly Isles, and was at least six weeks old when it reached my hands.

Bob—I beg his pardon, Fra Roberto—wrote in the most enthusiastic terms of his new mode of life. His bower was a woodcutter's abandoned hut, situated in an oaken glade, well sheltered from the colder breezes, yet within a few minutes' walk of points which commanded a noble stretch of sea, while, in other directions, a tolerably dense woodland district invited the recluse to those sylvan contemplations from which he expected to derive such solace.

The seclusion, he declared, was all he could possibly desire—the nearest hamlet being four miles distant, and, so far as he, Bob, knew, the nearest dwelling not within *three*.

“Quantock,” continued the solitary, “has been most kind, prohibiting his keepers, woodmen, &c., from approaching my haunts, while he gives me ‘carte blanche’ to do what I please in the forest. I am, in fact, ‘monarch of all I survey,’ and have literally seen nothing but ‘the fowl and the brute,’ including in the latter term, a poaching vagabond whom, thinking him belated, I welcomed to my cell. I had, it happened, nothing but my own frugal feast—a lettuce and some blackberries, with some excellent water—to set before him. With this ‘guiltless’ fare he did not seem highly satisfied, and, probably as an indemnification, when he departed, took away my boots, and, what I feel severely, my stewpan. Irrespective of this little accident, I am as happy as possible. I have not a fear or a care in the world, and the confidence that I shall never again see a human face, except

yours, my friend, and, say, a couple more, completes my felicity. Come and witness it.—ROBERTO. P.S.—You will remember the directions I gave you as to the road. Once within the Quantock property, steer S.S.W. half W. Perhaps the enclosed plan of sheep-tracks may help you across the hills. But, for goodness' sake, no *guide*. My retreat *must* not be known."

The enclosed "plan" resembled nothing so much as the skeleton of an umbrella with the ribs entangled. In the centre was a huge (disconnected) blot, meant, I suppose, to represent the hermit's abode.

Now, I had agreed to spend some weeks, that summer, yachting with a friend, and as Smijthe (he was very particular about his j) was rather addicted to dawdling about the coast, within easy reach of fresh butter and the *Times*, I expected that an opportunity might occur of attacking Sea Palling on its water-face. It did.

On a lovely noon in August we ran into a small estuary, flanked by higher cliffs than I had thought existed in those parts, and dropped anchor off a little village. Its only visible inhabitant—an exceedingly infirm and ancient mariner—paddled promptly off in a canoe, and asked if we wanted any nice fresh fish—heaving into view, as a temptation, what we should have taken for a younger brother of the sea-serpent, had not our steward pronounced it to be a conger, weighing at least ninety pounds!

"Chaps like *he*," the venerable aborigine assured us, "was frequently took in the bay."

Declining the wallowing monster, even at the re-

duced price of one-and-nine, and leaving the ancient mariner to chat with the crew, Smijthe and I jumped into the dingy and sculled ashore.

Arrivals by sea were evidently not common; for several natives, who had been slumbering on a fragrant couch of compost, in which sea-drift and mussel-shells freely intermingled, arose, stretched themselves, and came down to meet, or rather stare at us.

"Was this Sea Palling?"

"No; 'twere Falcombe."

"Then where *was* Sea Palling?"

"Four mile to the west'ard."

"Was it difficult to find?"

"'Pends on what we was a-looking for."

"Why, the town."

"Town! Sea Palling ain't a town. There's a pot-hus and a workus, but not much else. If the gents wished to go anywhere on squire's—Sir Quigley Quantock's—land, one of them could show the way."

Remembering Bob's caution, I was on my guard.

"I—I am going to Sir Quigley's; but as to a guide——"

"Squire's in Hitterly," put in a native. "If he warn't, he's never here. There ain't no house, you know."

"I know—that is, I suppose so. The fact is, I wish to make a hasty sketch or two in the woods. The thicker woods. If one of you will put me in the path, that is all I require."

A hasty consultation ensued among the natives, in the course of which, if there be any significance in the rise and fall of a halfpenny, I was submitted to the

arbitration of fortune, after which, bidding my friend a temporary farewell, I set forth with my guide.

Avoiding, as I found we might, the village, we were quickly on the wild down, and following a track which seemed to point towards a well-wooded district, on the landward slope of the hills, about five miles off. This, my guide remarked, was all on the squire's property.

It was a wild quest, but, faithful to Bob's injunctions, I here dismissed my native, and proceeded alone.

Scarcely a sign or sound of life interrupted my meditations as I strode along, until, feeling a little fatigued, I sat down upon a large boulder, and consulted Bob's "plan." I might as well have consulted the works of Confucius in the original manuscript! One track, however, took my fancy, and, as it bore in the direction Bob had told me to "steer," I followed that.

On, and on—I was passing trees, and clumps of trees; but as the woodland became denser, my difficulties increased. Where, in this trackless forest, was I to seek my hermit?

Not trackless! I became suddenly conscious of wheel-marks, and the dint of horse-hoofs crossing hither and thither. Wood-wains? No. The traces were too narrow, and too light, and the horses that drew these vehicles had small and shapely feet. The recluse, then, has not been able to isolate himself so utterly as he had hoped. Perhaps he has retired to some still remoter spot in the heart of the sheltering wood, where not even the chance wayfarer—Hallo!

A distant bugle: "Bright chanticleer proclaims the morn." Undoubtedly—but why *here* and *now*? The air suddenly glided, with astonishing dexterity, into "Oh the roast beef of Old England," with the usual supplementary assurance, in a varied form, that the institution was peculiarly British—and, round an angle of the wood, came swinging, at ten miles an hour—can I believe my eyes?—a well-appointed, rather rakish-looking, four-horse 'bus! From certain streamers disposed about the horses, and a little banner fluttering on the vehicle itself, it had all the appearance of being on its way to a fair—especially as the fourteen passengers on the outside, not to mention the twelve within, seemed to be in the highest possible merriment.

As the phenomenon swept past, I had time to read, in large characters on the panel, "THE HERMIT. Twice a day. There and back: Half-a-crown, driver included." In passing, several of the mirthful party had wafted affectionate greetings towards the solitary traveller; but the driver, with a civil gesture, pointed backward with his whip. The movement was presently explained by the appearance of a second conveyance—this time a pair-horse stage-coach, of the species now so nearly extinct.

Laden as it was, the coachman pulled up, and touched his hat.

"'Ermit, sir? 'Ermit? Make room for one a side o' *me*."

I shook my head.

"T'other's coming, sir," said the driver, "if you likes *he* better. He've got one place."

He drove on. On the back of the vehicle was its name:—"THE FRIAR TUCK." (Ah, Bob!) "One Shilling."

T'other one was not far off. Round the corner came, jolting and jingling, a rickety burlesque of that obsolete form of London cab, in which the driver balanced himself on a perch at the side, two passengers occupying the body. It was drawn by a broken-down hack, which embraced the first opportunity of stopping, as the driver, checking him, pointed to the vacant seat. I shook my head. The vehicle tottered forward. At its back there dangled a placard—its name, "THE FRA ROBERTO. Ninepence."

It was but too clear. Lynn's haunt had been discovered, and the sensitive recluse was being exhibited at half-a-crown, one shilling, and ninepence each!

I could not approach my poor friend in such company, but, noting the direction taken by the 'bus, it struck me that, by making a dive through the thicket, I might possibly anticipate their arrival. Hardly had I entered, when a familiar voice pronounced my name. I started round. It was Bob himself!

He was ensconced in a sort of arbour made of boughs, so closely interwoven that I had passed him almost within arm's length without notice.

"'Sh!" said Bob, with his finger on his lip; "I've sold them splendidly. How lucky you cut through here! Sit down, Harry, my boy, and I'll tell you all about it."

The hermit wore his summer robe—a by no means unbecoming garment. His hair and beard had grown to an inordinate length, and he himself was so much

thinner as to convince me that his root-and-water diet had been no mere pretence.

"We are safe *now*," said Bob. "Harry, you were in the right; I *am*" (with a melancholy smile) "an anachronism. The world has recognised that fact, and comes twice a day (besides pic-nics) to remind me of it. You remember the poacher I spoke of? That villain betrayed me. Within a few days of his visit, I began to be conscious of the occasional vicinity of my kind. Cigar-ends, sandwich papers, a battered umbrella, are not the ordinary products of a wilderness. Distant human voices mingled inharmoniously with the sylvan sounds. At least, I am aware of no British beast—man excepted—that is in the habit of insisting, in chorus, and for a considerable time together, that he is a 'jolly dog.' It was plain that these intruders purposely haunted my locality. I believe they peeped at me through the boughs. Guessing this, I secluded myself more. Then came messages, improvised, of course: 'Best compliments—could the hermit oblige some ladies with the loan of a rolling-pin?' 'A party of tourists, having forgotten the mustard, would the Fra,' &c. &c."

"I thought Sir Quigley had expressly forbidden such intruders."

"He had," said Bob. "I therefore wrote to him on the subject. Answer returned by agent—a Mr. Bobbery, or Bolberry. Poor Quig was lying dangerously ill at Milan. A retired solicitor had settled at Falcombe, and, wanting something to do, stirred up an old quarrel as to right of way across Quantock's woods. By Jove, sir, they carried it, and the first

result was the establishment of the cavalcade you beheld, 'working,' as they call it, from Falcombe to a most romantic spot in the heart of the forest, and, says the bill, 'within a stone's throw of the celebrated Hermit's Cave.' I was sorely tempted to test the truth of this latter announcement by practical experiment," concluded my friend.

"What shall you do, now?" I asked. "Come back, I hope, with me. You have had your fancy. Enough."

"Never," said the hermit. "I am content, if they would only let me alone. Yesterday I came to the resolution to abandon my cell during the day, and conceal myself here. When they find there is no chance of seeing me, the 'jolly dogs' may hold their orgies elsewhere. My door has but the latch, but I think they will respect *that*. At six o'clock we may go home."

Dear old Bob had judged too much by his own heart, which, eccentric as he was, was that of a true gentleman. Whether in thoughtlessness, or in mischief, the sanctity of his bower had been rudely violated. The jolly dogs had dined there, and, to all appearance, passed a very jolly time! Nothing, indeed, had been abstracted; on the contrary, the corks, bottles, broken plates, &c., not to mention pie-crust, bones, lobster-shells, &c.—bequeathed to the anchorite—might have filled a small wheel-barrow.

I was yet gazing on the relics, when I heard Bob utter an exclamation. He had clutched a fragment of newspaper on which his eye had fallen. His face was pale and agitated.

"I—I had striven to forget her," he stammered, "and here, even here, like a ghost, she haunts me still!"

The paragraph to which he pointed announced that Lady Tattershore, who (readers would remember) had become a widow some time before, during a residence at Cairo, would, at the expiration of her mourning, bestow her hand, and her twenty-five thousand a year, upon the Marquis of Queerfish.

"Tattershore was a brute, and Queerfish is a worse," groaned Bob, dropping the paper from his hand.

His passion had never been eradicated. He had, as it were, forcibly banished this woman's image from his mind; but the circumstance so singularly brought to his notice, caused it to return with such force, that poor Bob, already worried and perplexed with the invasion of his solitude, could not regain his tranquil mood.

One thing was plain—that all hope of peace, in his present retreat, was at an end. I have not space to tell by what arguments I prevailed upon Bob to accept the loan of a spare suit I had fortunately brought in my knapsack, to cut his hair, to pack up his hermit attire, and, abandoning all else, embark with me in the hospitable bark of my friend Smijthe; nor how the latter received him with the greatest kindness, and, conveying him to Dieppe, put him on the way to his new destination—Switzerland.

From the latter country Bob wrote once, informing me that he had pitched his tent, or cabin, this time (as he hoped) *above* the world, on a mountain-side, above Martigny. In vain. A path had been found,

outflanking and overtopping the hermit, and a huge telescope, mounted like a gun, swept his position at all hours of the day. Bob went higher. A member of the Alpine Club assailed him by a new route, and discovered a platform so convenient, that a small neat edifice was at once erected there, and the *Hôtel de l'Hermite* became a favourite excursion from Martigny.

In despair, poor Bob travelled into a secluded district of Westphalia, and here occurred the strange event that concludes this narrative.

My friend, the Baroness d'Ubique, having kindly offered me the use, for some months, of a residence of hers, something between a farm-house and a castle, in Westphalia, I set forth to occupy it. It was haunted (hence, perhaps, the easy terms of my tenancy); but I rather like ghosts, and the baroness knew it.

Halting to sleep in a certain village, the name at once struck me as having been mentioned by Lynn in his first letter from these parts. In the second, and last, he had given me no address whatever.

Sending for the landlord, I asked him if British travellers often came this road.

Not unfrequently, was the answer. (Poor Bob!) There were even English residents at no great distance. On one side there lay a large property belonging to an English miladi. On the other, there was—or there might be, for he was said to be dead, or, at least, dying—a British gentleman, mad, but harmless as a child, who wears——

“A gown? A beard?”

“Both.”

I was in the saddle in five minutes, and, well guided, was, in thirty more, by Bob's bedside. Not too soon. The dear old fellow, worn to a very shadow, lay, as it seemed, expecting his end. An old peasant woman, his sole attendant, crouched in a corner of the hut.

Bob recognised me, but his mind perpetually wandered. He believed that he had been many years a recluse, and, identifying himself in his mental weakness with Goldsmith's Hermit, talked constantly of his "Angelina," avowing his persuasion that she, who had been the star of his life, would once more visit him, if but to receive his last breath.

In spite of poor Lynn's debilitated condition there was something in his appearance that seemed to encourage hope. I must obtain medical advice, and that as promptly as possible. He had fallen into a quiet slumber, and I galloped back to the inn.

There was no good medical advice near at hand; but, said the landlord, the English miladi (who arrived at the castle last Monday) always brought with her her own English doctor. Doubtless, *he* might come to his compatriot.

"The miladi's name? Quick."

It was not to be said quickly. "Treck—Thwack—Trek—Träk—Tattersh——"

"Tattershore!"

"Yes—well—so—Tattershore!"

I had no time for wonder at this strange fatality. I despatched a note to miladi, suppressing, of course, Bob's name. It was answered by the doctor in

person, a gentle, grey-haired man, but with clear intelligent eyes, in which occasionally there sparkled a touch of humour.

We became such friends that, on our way back from a visit to the hermit, I told him *all*. Dr. Thurgood listened with attention, and fell into deep thought.

"I am much in Lady Tattershore's confidence," he said. "I know more of her feelings than—than I have a right to tell. I may tell you *this*—she has been for years a changed woman. Her unhappy married life did that good for her. Gentle, quiet, loving, if ever she marries again—(how lucky she refused Lord Queerfish!)—happy will be the man! There is but one way of dealing with *this* case of ours," added the doctor, with a laughing gleam in his eye. "As I'm a man and a doctor, I'll try it! Ask no questions, and express no surprise."

He wrung my hand and vanished.

Next day a carriage drove up to the inn, and Lady Tattershore, accompanied by the doctor, receiving me with a sweet, and, I thought, grateful smile, invited me to go with them to the hermitage. Arrived there, Thurgood begged me to sit by my friend until he should join me. Poor Lynn was very weak and wandering.

"I am dying, Harry, and she will not come. Oh, she will never—never come!"

That statement was instantly falsified. His next words were: "My life! My all in life!" Kneeling, weeping, the lady was there, clasping his wasted hand.

Mr. Lyan did not die. He resides principally at Florence, where, in his beautiful palace, adored by his wife, whom he has a fancy for calling Angelina, though her name is Grace, he sees a good deal of the world he has abjured, and bears it remarkably well.





PARADISE REVISITED.

QF all the innocent tastes of my childhood, two only may, I think, be said to have fairly weathered the storms and buffets of life; to have defied the disenchanting influence of time; and to flourish yet, serene and unimpaired, above the ruins of many a far more potent passion. These are, pastry and pantomime.

I like a tart. Why shouldn't I like a tart? Because I am a man, shall I deny the acquaintance of a Bath-bun? Must the cheese-cake lose its flavour in passing between lips on which time and nature have conferred a beard? Nonsense. I am accustomed to speak out. I like all manner of the sweetest things known to the craft of confectioner—nor would I covet a more delightful ten minutes than may be passed in renewing many a pleasing intimacy of this description. Is there, I would calmly inquire, anything brutal or unmanly in eating ladies'-fingers? Can there be more delicate enjoyment than in a meringue?

My deliberate opinion, founded upon close, occa-

sionally furtive, observation, is, that an attachment to sweet] things is far more deeply rooted in the manly British breast than is generally supposed. It is my proud remembrance never to have given in to the false shame which suggests concealment of this innocent partiality. I am no more ashamed of the sweetness of my tooth than of its whiteness. At Didcot, I may have been seen to dash down the window and call out, "Banbury-cake!" in tones asserting themselves above the thunder of the train, and almost before it stopped. I may often have been seen engaged with this—when fresh—exquisite dainty—not, as I have noticed the pusillanimous do, behind the *Times*—but, frankly and crumblingly, before mankind!

While writing, an idea has occurred to me. Now that wine-drinking is rapidly on the decline, why should pastry-eating—I mean in a convivial sense—not take its room? The effect at public dinners would be no less imposing.

"Gentlemen, pray charge your platters. Trifle." ("Bumpers" might still be added.)

In more private circles, the familiar wish, "May we ne'er want a friend, nor a bottle to give him!" would lose nothing in heartiness by the substitution of "tartlet" for "bottle." Since pitchers have fallen somewhat into desuetude as vehicles for port wine, "My friend and *Fritter*" would be a positive improvement upon the popular version. Again, a very trivial change in another favourite toast, would supply us with the sentiment (accompanied, say, with a round of Charlottes-Russes), "May the present moment *not* be the sweetest of our lives!"

Surely, surely, patriotism and loyalty, hitherto too much associated with champagne, may be evolved as readily from a macaroon. Cannot friendship—acknowledged to sparkle with such peculiar brightness in the bowl—glow as richly in the bosom of a Christmas pudding?

Finally, be it remembered that that exquisitely pleasurable sensation, supposed (in song) to be derivable from not retiring to one's usual residence until past daybreak, need not, of necessity, be foregone. Appetite will probably determine that point. And there is this decided advantage in my scheme, that, whereas people were accustomed to continue their potations long after they had ceased to care much about it, that can never be the case with reference to the lighter lollipops which shall conclude my banquet.

Although, as I have said, devoid of that craven feeling which prompts the repudiation of such sweet friends of one's boyhood as apple-puff and mince-pie, I will own to a certain degree of embarrassment in effecting the purchase of smaller and slighter matters. Toffee I can demand, in clear unhesitating tones; as, by a liberal order, it may be made to look as if intended for a neighbouring nursery. Butter-Scotch, for the same reason, offers no difficulty. But I will admit that, did occasion present itself, I would prefer purchasing my barley-sugar through the intervention of an agent.

Of the latter compound, there is a kind whose paly gold exercises over me a remarkable fascination. It may be that it recalls certain ringlets, of similar form and hue, that—Well, no matter; but she and I

have eaten marmalade from one gallipot—and these are not things to be forgotten.

No later than yesterday, I stood gazing irresolutely (under pretence of examining a new coffee-mill) at a cluster of these amber delicacies, enshrined in the usual vase of crystal. Suddenly, a bright thought struck me. Assuming a slight cough, I stepped in.

“Have you—have—anything that’s—that’s good for—dear me!—eh—dear me!—a bad cold?—something to——” I pointed to my throat, groaning.

The shopman handed me a small box; hard, brown, and sour.

“Black-currant drops, sir? Much recommended.”

I knew them, and declined.

“Dr. Pilberrow’s Nurses’ Joy, sir. Sugar-lozenges, tinctured with magnes——”

“No, no. I wish for something—anything you have, of a softer, more lubricating—see! Such, for instance, as that yellowish substance, in the long glass.”

“Barley-sugar, sir? Yes, sir. How much would you please to have, sir?”

I may be mistaken, but I fancied that the phantom of a smile stole over that young man’s visage, as he weighed me out a pound, throwing in a little bit over.

Equally fervent, equally unswerving, has been my attachment to that phase of dramatic art known as Pantomime. From the Cave of Doldrums, to the clown’s final summerset, I am a captive to the illusive scene; bound up with its details; laying up stores of wisdom and prudence from its suggestive changes.

Why do I speak of illusion? Intercourse, for a

certain number of years, with the world, has placed me in a condition to aver that Pantomime is truth—truth coloured, condensed, elaborated—but truth itself. Gorgeous temples, demanding reverence—with men behind, in corduroys and dirty shirt-sleeves, pushing them on; gently heaving seas, the waves (invisible) punching each other's ribs, in a cloud of slate-coloured dust; baronial castles, whose noble occupants must have been content to dwell, like chrysalids, in the interstices of the single wall. Clowns, boisterous, mischievous, unscrupulous; harlequins, gay, plausible, vindictive, mysterious; columbines, fair and fickle; pantaloons, with every attribute of age, except its reverence; even to the lovely Queen of Fays, who, after taking graceful leave at the close of the introduction, reappears at the general finish, standing on one leg above a revolving wheel, surrounded by a green glare, changing into red, and thence into an unpleasant smell. All these things, only in a far less honest form, have I encountered beyond the wall of a theatre; and if it soothe me to sit and witness their reproduction, under circumstances which can no longer betray, who shall censure? I don't care *who*. To-day—just for to-day—I am a boy again, and my two boyish fancies shall have their ample range. I will lunch at a pastrycook's, and I will subsequently attend a pantomime. Yet, hold! Boys are gregarious. Is it to renew the wholesomer part of youth, to feast and gaze without a friend! Where shall I seek another lad? It occurs to me, in a manner so abrupt and singular, as to be almost worthy of psychological analysis—had I an hour to spare—that my

excellent neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Tibblethwayte, are spending the Christmas from home, unavoidably leaving three at least of their little flock behind them. What if I obtain them for the day and evening?

I looked at my watch. It could not yet be their dinner-time. Their young appetites must be in the very highest pastry condition. I was at the house in three minutes, requesting, with respectful compliments, audience of Miss Cavalier, the preceptress—a lady of infinite stiffness and inexorable will.

Reassured by the tidings that Miss Cavalier was absent for the day, I made my way to the school-room, and, stilling the noisy greetings, announced to Nurse Edmonds that I required the loan of her charges.

There was a pause of trembling expectation, for nurse looked graver than could be desired.

“Missis had hexpressed her wishes as the poor little things might have a little hentertainment; but, of which kind?”

“It isn’t a norrery?” said Master Bobby, with a look of dark suspicion.

I shook my head.

“Nor it isn’t a fillysofical class-lecture?” ejaculated Miss Mattie—a tear in ambush under her eyelid, ready, in the event of an affirmative, to dim the pretty blue.

I laughed contemptuously.

“Bosh!” said Master Augustus. “Mr. Goodbody wouldn’t take us to such rubbish as *that* comes to! But it isn’t ‘Instructive Riddles’—eh?” the young gentleman added, with a slight diminution of confidence.

"Nor a threepenny reading?" said Mattie.

At the last suggestion there was a subdued but general groan.

"You don't like readings?" I asked, in feigned astonishment.

"Not when it's such awful (word expressive of decomposing matter) as the last," said Master Augustus, firmly.

"Why, what was it?"

"'Paradise Rewisited,' sir," explained nurse. "'By a Loacle Poet.' Ma'amselle hev took them to all the four; but they come back quite cross and sleepy, and seemed as if they couldn't tell which they was at, last."

"No wonder! Hark ye, children! I am intending, this day, to revisit Paradise, or what, at your age, somewhat resembled it to me. I have promised myself a Christmas Pantomime!" (A cry of joy.) "Pausing on the way, at a spot where, I am given to understand, light refreshments, adapted to juvenile tastes, may be procured, and enjoyed without fear of after consequences. Will you come with me?"

Nurse hesitated to answer the appealing looks.

"If—if ma'amselle should know it——"

"Ma'amselle *shall* know it, to-morrow. Meantime, I take upon myself the responsibility."

And, engaging to restore the other three children by a reasonable hour, I the fourth child carried them off in triumph.

Merry as grasshoppers, we made our way along the most disturbed thoroughfares we could find: Mattie and I leading: the boys close at our heels. I noticed

with secret satisfaction that, in passing any pastry-cook's—and we passed not a few—our rear-guard sensibly relaxed their pace, and even Mattie's little fingers gave an involuntary pressure. At length, as we neared a perfect wilderness of sweets, the prospect became too maddening, and Master Augustus, dashing to the front, proposed a halt.

I affected to demur, but Mattie's appealing look, and the fragrance wafted forth as we lingered in consultation on the threshold, resolved the question. We entered. Here, as a veteran, I deemed some words of caution not misplaced. I besought my ardent levies not to tilt blindly at Bath-buns, the major tarts, or great satisfying things of *any* kind, but to survey the ground, and then, tranquilly, advisedly, commence the attack.

The foray lasted so long, that, in common prudence, I was obliged to sound the recal. The damage inflicted on the enemy, especially in the arm of open tarts, was very considerable. I decline to mention my own achievements (generals rarely do), and shall only state that, when my three charges had made their computations, there remained unaccounted for as follows :—One triangular tart, a Shrewsbury cake, three apricot puffs, one cheese-cake, and a maid-of-honour, together with some minor matters, and (I think) a glass of cherry-brandy. For all of which, notwithstanding the mystery that hung over their disappearance, I cheerfully paid.

Fortune had decreed that there was to be no pause in our delight. A bill suspended in the shop had forewarned us that there was to be at one of the

larger theatres a morning performance of the Grand Christmas Pantomime, commencing at two o'clock. Just time. We should not want any dinner? Eh?

Master Augustus having requested, in the name of the party, that the meal in question might not be mentioned in their hearing for a week, we set forth.

Capital places! A brilliant house! Beautiful red glare—so different from the mere sunshine we had quitted! A crowd of happy children, from six years old to seventy, settling themselves in their places for three hours' ceaseless enjoyment. For our parts, we gave ourselves up wholly to the scene: Mattie alone looking a little grave, and casting so many nervous glances in a certain direction, that I was induced to inquire the reason.

It seemed that the figure of a lady in a neighbouring box, whose back was towards us, had forcibly recalled that of Miss Cavalier.

Could it be herself?

Oh no, no. Mattie considered that was impossible! Miss Cavalier (I gathered from my little friend's remarks) was rather Miss Puritan in the matter of theatres, neither attending them herself, nor willingly permitting anybody else to do so. Furthermore, she regarded the half million of her fellow-Christians who, directly or indirectly, made their bread by these unhallowed institutions (not to mention the several millions, from her sovereign downward, who derived solace and amusement from them), as in the most imminent spiritual peril; evincing altogether views of the most elevated kind, and charity of that

comprehensive nature which is usually found to characterise such an intelligence.

The rising of the curtain at this juncture banished all remembrance of the accidental resemblance, and the possible scolding on the morrow, it had brought into Mattie's mind.

I am not going into minute detail. Enough that what succeeded surpassed our most sanguine anticipations, and even the foreshadowings of the bill itself, which was not framed with diffidence. Let me simply record that the opening scene was even more gloomy and depressing than usual. It was the abode of an individual of doubtful sex, Mr. (or Mrs.) Antiquity, who, in addition to keeping an old curiosity shop, dabbled slightly in dramatic literature: his (or her) present distress arising from the tightness of the fairy market, with reference to subjects for a pantomime. Need it be related that, in the moment of supreme despondency, a square black pitfall opened, and, after a slight delay, suggestive of the coming fairy stopping to tie her shoe, that aerial being stepped upon the stage, and presented Antiquity with all that was needed, in the form of a new and enlarged edition of Jack the Giant Killer. The mere mention of that familiar name elicited from us a burst of involuntary applause, and when the scene changed to the humble but cheerful dwelling of—how shall I describe him? Jack the elder—we resettled ourselves, as in preparation for events of thrilling interest.

Pantomime corrects history, and, whereas we had always been instructed that Jack's first victim was eighteen feet high, and resided in a cavern commo-

diously situated on the top of St. Michael's Mount, we now found that he began with a little stunted victim of ten feet and a half, who had no ostensible residence at all. That Jack's departure on this errand was celebrated by a ball, in which sixty young ladies, in light and brief habiliments, formed some very pretty tableaux—caused *us* no more surprise than it did the elder John, who sat and smoked the while; for, but little is known of Cornish domestic life in the days of King Arthur, and this pleasing demonstration might have filled the place of what would now have been a public dinner.

Such a hop-o'-my-thumb as we have described gave the intrepid Jack, as might be expected, very little trouble. His head (he had but one) was quickly on the road to Lyonesse—as, now-a-days, one places a remarkable sturgeon at the foot of royalty. But the next giant was a totally different affair. His heads were three in number. His stature was variously estimated from eighteen to twenty-four feet. His temper was irascible, his appetite without limit. That this terrible monster was on the move, was rendered manifest by the numerous rustics who, with countenances pale and elongated, passed with long strides across the stage, or huddled in terrified groups at the wing. It subsequently became known that Gorgibuster's appetite was, this morning, singularly keen: he having breakfasted early, and slenderly, on a single ox. Furthermore, he was known especially to desire human flesh, having but recently devoured two-thirds of a school who had been permitted, by an indiscreet usher, to bathe near his dwelling. Some of the parents

having remonstrated, Jack had been appealed to, and hence his present enterprise.

It has been a point of much dispute among modern writers, whether giants roared. This one did. A low rumbling sound, increasing in volume at every utterance, announced the monster's approach. Music of a colossal nature accompanied the sound of mighty steps, which—had there been such an instrument near—we might have attributed to the big drum—and Gorgibuster floundered on the scene.

As he was the largest, so was he the most complete and workable giant I had ever seen. His legs displayed as much tractability as if their lower fathom or so had been cast in the mould of nature, not of art. His heads were on the best possible terms, and, but for the peculiarity of the eyes being situated in the chin, and the nose on the forehead, might have been called human. Moreover, those eyes (being practicable) admitted of being winked; and the very first wink the giant gave was the signal for a demonstration we had not expected. The giant was accosted by stentorian voices as "George!" was offered the compliments of the season, was congratulated on his growth and generally robust appearance, and was otherwise greeted so much in the style of an old acquaintance, that I referred to the bill for information, and thereby discovered that the vital principle of the giant was composed of Mr. George R. Bungaye, renowned for feats of strength and comic minstrelsy.

The giant did not always roar. He spoke in colloquial tones, and threw some light upon another mysterious question, by frankly admitting that with

regard to "*fee—faw—fum*" neither he (Gorgibuster) nor any of his brethren, had the remotest idea what was intended to be conveyed by those remarkable expressions.

I have dwelt long upon this giant—for the truth is, we liked him—we took to him. He was not the furious ill-bred monster we had been taught to expect. Rumour had belied him. Gay, frank, genial, he showed himself possessed of the most attractive social attributes. He sang, he jested, he actually—though at the cost, we feared, of much pain and weariness—shuffled through the sailors' hornpipe: using his vicarious legs with as much spirit as though wicker-work were instinct with life. His very club—formed of timber which possessed the rare and curious property of collapsing, when brought into contact with any hard substance—partook of its master's yielding and peaceful disposition. And as for his appetite—when it is remembered that he had three mouths to feed, and some twenty feet of stowage-room demanding freight, I affirm that it was by no means inordinate.

With regret we witnessed the fate of this so young and happy giant! In the bright heyday of life—in the flower of appetite, always peckish—yet never voracious—he was cut off by that unfair weapon, Jack's sword of sharpness; retiring into his own stomach, so as to admit of decapitation, his three heads were cut off; and, with faces wholly unchanged, beaming and winking as in life, were transmitted to the king. An adjuration to the prostrate trunk from the gallery, to rise and give them "*Hot codlings,*" was treated with the contempt it deserved, and in a

few minutes we were in the full swing and riot of the harlequinade.

Glorious was the fun. We were fortunate in our clown. More accomplished fooling was never seen, since the sun of Folly went down in Grimaldi. All four of us, exhausted with laughter, were taking advantage of a moment's pause in the hurry of events, to lean back and wipe our brows, when Mattie uttered an exclamation. Following the direction of her eyes, my own fell, astonished, upon the lady to whom our attention had already been directed. She had turned round, and was leaning forward, flushed with excitement, and devouring the scene with the interest of a child of ten. Miss Cavalier!

Our parties subsequently met in the passage, Miss Cavalier walking between an old gentleman with a pleasant face and reverend grey head, and a fair lady, who seemed to be his daughter. As I boldly presented my charges, Miss Cavalier blushed and smiled.

"Kind friends—over-persuaded—couldn't leave—pleasant spectacle—such happy faces." Some such murmurs reached my ear, as I put my little companions into the carriage, and their preceptress, following, waved me a sweet adieu.

There was no scolding on the morrow.



BUSILY ENGAGED.



IT must be done, Dick, my boy," said my uncle, mournfully, as he filled his glass, and pushed the claret to me. "Come, now, make up your mind; off with you to-morrow, and success attend you."

"My dear uncle, once more let me——"

"My dear nephew, you have done it so often that repetition is useless. I am not a harsh relative, or I should simply say, 'Dick, go and be married;' or, as my theatrical prototype—especially if wealthy—was wont to express himself, 'Don't talk to *me*, young sir. Off, puppy, and be married, or never see my face again.' No, my dear Dick, I belong to a race of civilized uncles, and I confine myself to a line of argument which ought to weigh more with you than any commands of mine. It was the desire of your good father that you should marry before you were twenty-six."

"But I am *not* twenty-six, and——"

"You will be, in a month," returned my uncle, with

wonderful recollection. "Why, there's not a day to lose."

"Well, but, my dear sir——" I began with some consternation.

"I'll cut this matter short," said my uncle. "You remember what the great Duke said to that other strong-handed veteran—when India was in sore need—'You or I.'"

"Perfectly. By the bye, now, what do you think, sir, would have been the result, supposing Napier——"

"We will pursue that branch of the subject on a future occasion," said Sir Richard, dryly. "In the mean time, go where love, if not glory, waits you, together with, I should imagine, about eight thousand pounds."

"It appears, then, that my wife is already found?"

"Found, yes. Selected, no," said my uncle.

"There is more than one candidate for my affections?"

"There are—let me see," said my uncle, calculating, "nine."

"Nine?"

"My old friend and college-chum, Bob Crowdie," said Sir Richard Purkiss, "has nine daughters. One—a sweet, charming girl—is unhappily deformed. Out of the remainder Crowdie is anxious—and so am I—that you should select the partner of your life; and, my dear boy, since I have never known you express anything but an indifference, almost amounting to contempt, for the entire sex, I trust you will the more readily fall into our views."

"I know so little of these good people——"

"Don't call them 'good people,' sir, as if they were fishwives," said my uncle, a little warmly. "If you don't know them better, the fault's your own. They like *you*, Dick. Come, I may say that—and—and—I fear I am telling tales; but I am by no means sure that you have not (unintentionally, of course) somewhat compromised the peace of mind of Miss—of *one* of them, already."

"I am glad it's only one," I said, laughing. "But are you serious? If so, you should at least tell me frankly to which of these young ladies you refer."

"There you must excuse me. That I cannot do," said my uncle, mysteriously. "No. Were I to indicate Miss Crowdie, I might be doing an injustice to Miss Sophia; or, by pointing, however indirectly, to Miss Lucy, I might divert your ideas from my pretty Mattie, whose claim, without prejudice to Ethel, might only be exceeded by my little Laura Jane. In short——"

"Enough. Let the doubt remain. It gives a mysterious charm to the expedition. But there is still a difficulty."

"I see none," said my uncle, impatiently.

"Supposing among so many I should find it impossible to make my selection?"

"Oh, is *that* all?" said Sir Richard, much relieved. "I think that obstacle might be easily overcome. Let Crowdie choose. He is the best judge of his own children. Yes; I am clear you could not do better than refer it entirely to him. And I think I can promise you, Dick," added my uncle, cheerfully, "that he has already made up his mind."

"I am sure he is very kind," said I. "But, uncle, *to-morrow*?"

"As I have already observed," returned Sir Richard, "*you or I*. My brother's earnest desire was that there should be a direct heir in our family, and he named twenty-six as the latest age to which he could wish your marriage deferred. You have neglected to make your choice, and hang me if I think you ever will. Now, mark me, if you don't, I *shall*. I am told men do marry at sixty—generally some chit of eighteen—and I know a pretty little thing of the sort (she's at school, not a hundred miles hence), whom, as your aunt, you could not fail to revere. As for my testamentary intentions, Dick, I have never made a mystery of them. You are my heir. But, if I marry, my wife and my children will take away the bulk of the fortune I would fain have had descend upon you. Come, Dick, set me free from this responsibility. Go and visit these good friends to-morrow, and let your first letter announce to me that you are engaged."

The kind old man extended his hand. I pressed it in acquiescence, and the next day departed for the residence of Mr. Crowdie.

Not being quite certain whether my uncle had prepared the family for my visit, I thought it expedient to give it the appearance of a morning call, and accordingly, leaving my luggage at the village inn, I strolled up to the mansion. The whole family were in the garden, and thither I proceeded.

The party assembled on the lawn was of appalling dimensions. About eighteen young ladies and one

young man were engaged at croquet; while Mr. and Mrs. Crowdie, with Alice the deformed reclining on a chair couch, looked on. Six of the players eliminated themselves from the company, and came to greet me.

"Now comes the question," thought I, "of which of these fair-cheeked maidens have my dangerous attractions and assiduous attentions proved the bane?"

Miss Mattie, with the brown frank eyes, was quicker than the rest, and gave me her hand.

"It isn't *you*," I thought, and dismissed her gently back to her game.

Miss Crowdie followed, laughing gaily. She had a wide but handsome mouth, and pearl-white teeth.

"Nor *you*," I thought.

"Just in time, Mr. Purkiss," cried Miss Laura Jane, shyly offering me a mallet.

"Doubtful—ah!" was my reflection.

Miss Sophy gave me neither hand nor word, but just lifted eyes of the colour of a forget-me-not, and dropped them again, while a slight but rich blush passed over her smooth cheek.

"*Aha!*" I whispered to myself.

Mr. and Mrs. Crowdie now joined the group. The lady was quiet and reserved, and wore a sort of astonished look, which was said to have been not always habitual with her, but had increased with the advent of each successive daughter, until the birth of Laura Jane placed her in a condition of permanent amazement, to which no language was apparently adequate; for she never spoke, except in answer, or in faint disclaimer of the replies and observations perpetually

attributed to her by her facetious husband. The latter was a bluff, plain-spoken man—*so* plain, indeed, that to mistake him for vulgar would have been a pardonable error, had he not prided himself upon that very bluntness, esteeming it an essential characteristic of the good old country squire.

"Ha, ha, ha!" was his greeting, with a poke in the ribs, which I cleverly dodged. "Here you find us at our daily sports, and precious finikin stuff it is. No bowls, or leap-frog, or single-stick now. Croquet, sir, croquet is the game. It's imbecile in principle, and absurd in practice. It tends, I am told, to softening of the brain, but by a wise provision of nature, those most devoted to the game appear to be endowed with a less proportion of the organ."

"What I see before me somewhat contradicts your theory, sir," I said.

"Oh, my daughters are no fools. I don't mean that. They play because they have good ankles. Mrs. Crowdie often tells me she never saw a string of wenches with cleaner pasterns."

"Oh, Philip!" said Mrs. Crowdie, "how *can* you?"

"And how is my good old friend, hey?" continued Mr. Crowdie, putting his hands behind him, and looking as burly as he possibly could. "Not married yet? Faith, I expect to hear it every day. As Mrs. Crowdie observed to me, he's just the jolly old boy to do it!"

"Oh, Philip, really——" protested Mrs. Crowdie.

"Come, Dick the younger, if I may call you so, for hang me if your uncle doesn't look as young as

you, go and take a club or mallet, or whatever they call it, with those impatient hussies, and, when you want to be refreshed with rational conversation, come back, as my wife always says, to *us*."

"Oh, Philip!"

"Stop one moment. Here's a girl of mine you have hardly ever seen. Mr. Purkiss, my darling," he added, tenderly leaning over her.

Alice raised herself a little, and smiled. Such a smile—soft, bright, saint-like—as if rather yielding than seeking pity. I bowed mechanically, lower than my wont, and, next minute, found myself absorbed in the imbecilities of croquet.

The game, as it chanced, came to a premature end—if, to such a sport, such an end be possible—those ladies not belonging to the house having to seek their respective homes. The rest dispersing in different directions, it so happened that I was left alone with the pretty Sophy. I was really astonished at this girl's beauty. Why had I never noticed it before? Her sweet yet timid manner perfectly captivated me. I was angry when the dressing-bell announced that we must part.

To my great surprise I found a room prepared for me, and my portmanteau—surreptitiously sent for from the inn—unpacked. This was a good sign. I hurried my dressing, thinking all the time of Sophy's eyes. A change was coming over me. I had always abhorred the thought of marriage. Now the prospect gave me a thrill of delight.

"Sir Hugh," said my host to the dull young man, who had been playing croquet all day, and looked as

if he had done nothing else all his life, "take Miss Crowdie. Richard, bring Sophy. My wife and I always trudge in together, like Punch and Judy."

(There was a tradition in the family that by this, his favourite expression, Mr. Crowdie meant Darby and Joan.)

I saw more of Sophy's long lashes that day than of my own plate. To my great surprise, I was actually falling in love with the girl, and that at express speed. Dinner passed away like a dream, and the chair beside me was vacant. The cheery voice of my host aroused me—

"Come up here, my dear fellow. Hugh—Sir Hugh Sagamore—had to leave us, as they have a party at home."

I saw we were alone.

"Hark ye, my dear Purkiss!" continued my host, "I'm going to speak to you, like a bluff old fellow as I am. Fathers have sharpish eyes. I observed your manner to-day, and I think I can make a shrewd guess what has given us the pleasure of your company. You know my plain way, and will pardon me if I anticipate what should certainly have been allowed to come from you. You are interested in my little Soph?"

"My dear sir," I answered, promptly, "I am greatly indebted to you for your correct estimate of my feelings. I am, indeed—to adopt your own expression—interested in Miss Sophia, and, with permission of those to whom she is so deservedly dear, I——"

"Dick, my boy, say not another word"—my kind (future) parent-in-law grasped my hand—"win her.

Take her. She is yours. I give my girls each their eight thousand—interest for my life—principal after. So much for that. You will inform your uncle to-morrow ?”

“Certainly, my dear sir. But—ahem!—the— young lady——”

“Paha! I forgot that,” said my impulsive host. “Well, I think you may be pretty sure. Still, as you say, it might be as well—just excuse me a moment.” And he bustled out of the room.

I had hardly collected my ideas when he was back again.

“All right. Some more wine? No? Well, then, just go and see how you like our new orchids in the conservatory. There’s the door.”

I went in. It was growing dusk, but I could detect a fairy form moving among the shrubs. I followed it, and gently took the little pendent hand. It was not withdrawn. What I said, I certainly shall not write. Let everybody propose, for himself. The murmurs that responded to mine were eminently satisfactory. My happiness was only equalled by my astonishment at the whole matter. Both were profound.

A little difficulty now arose. It behoved me to plead for an early day for our union. I had been so slightly acquainted with the family, that I had positively never exchanged a dozen words with this beloved of my soul. It might be almost said, I had not known her at all till within these three hours. How, then, can I fitly introduce the subject of my intense impatience? Shall I leave it to my plain-spoken papa-in-law? No. Here goes.

"And now, *dearest* Sophy (ah, that sweet name)!"

"Sweet enough, but it's not *mine*," retorted my affianced lady.

"N-not—yours!" I stammered, a strange misgiving stealing over me.

"Certainly not," was the reply; and, as she turned to the light, I beheld the face of Miss Crowdie.

"I—I—eh—why, what is this?" said I.

The young lady burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands.

"Mamma t-told me—you w-w-wished to speak to me," she sobbed.

I hate to see a woman weep. And *she* wept so prettily!

"My dear Miss Crowdie——"

"C-call me Su-hu-san."

"Well, Susan, dear, let me wipe off that falling ——" I was gliding into the old song, and also, strange as it may seem, into a degree of interest for the fair weeper hardly compatible with my previous engagements.

I scarcely know how it chanced that one of her pretty brown silken curls had got entangled on my button. While engaged in disentangling it, and murmuring words of comfort, more or less coherent, Mr. Crowdie's broad face appeared at the window. To my surprise, he merely laughed merrily—adding:

"Dick, I want you. Come here a moment."

Miss Crowdie vanished, and I, leaping out at the window, joined my host.

"Dick," he said, taking my arm, "here has been a little mistake. My wife, I must tell you, has one per-

sistent fancy. It is her fixed idea that if the eldest of a family of girls does not marry *first*, the matches of the rest will be unlucky. With a decision, for which I certainly should not have given her credit, she sent Susan in Sophy's place ; and—eh—do you mind much ? She's good as gold—my Susy. Come, what d'ye say ?”

“ But, my dear friend, Miss Sophia——”

“ Oh ! I'll make *that* all right. Thanks, my dear boy, you have made us very happy.” And he hurried off.

“ Mr. Purkiss, Mr. Purkiss, we are going for a moonlight row on the lake,” cried a silver voice from an upper casement, and presently down came a bevy of damsels, in the centre of whom I recognised my present betrothed, Miss Crowdie, walking with the timid assurance of a bride, and looking, in the moonlight, I must confess, fair and graceful as Diana's self. It seemed to be an understood thing that I was to give her my arm ; and thus it came to pass that, in the walk down to the lake, we were left together, an arrangement to which (I noticed with some relief) Miss Sophia's exertions greatly contributed.

They were really a charming family, on the best terms with themselves, each other, and all around them. We had a very merry row, and were in the midst of an Italian barcarole, when Mr. Crowdie's jovial voice hailed us from the landing-place.

“ Let's put in *here*,” said one of the party, pointing to a bank, on which we could see glow-worms sparkling.

As we neared the spot, several of the party rose at

once. The boat gave a sudden lurch—there was a shriek—a plunge—a gurgle—Miss Laura Jane had toppled overboard, and gone down into the deepest part of the lake! I tore off my coat, and plunged after, catching her, I imagine, as she rose to the surface, and bore her safely to the bank. The poor child, though much frightened, did not seem materially injured by the shock. She was put carefully to bed, and all seemed going well, when, somewhat later, the housekeeper beckoned Mrs. Crowdie out of the room.

A little after, Mr. Crowdie received a similar summons, and it became known that Laura Jane was not in a satisfactory state. She had become feverish and delirious, talking wildly of the accident and of her rescue.

Mr. Crowdie came down with an anxious look on his broad visage.

“We think, Purkiss, that she wants to see *you*.”

“Me, my dear sir?”

“Yes. Would you mind stepping up? My wife will be greatly obliged to you.”

In a minute or two I was beside the poor girl’s couch; her mother and the nurse standing opposite, her father at the foot. Her cheek was flushed, and her eyes, bright and restless with fever, rolled eagerly from face to face till they dwelt on mine. Then a sudden change came over her. She became calm, stretched out her little hand to me, and, closing her eyes, seemed as if she would sleep, still keeping my fingers prisoner.

“Who shall sit up with her, my dear?” asked Mr. Crowdie. “Stop! Her lips move. She knows us.

She's trying to speak. Ask her, Dick, who shall sit by her?"

I repeated the question.

"*You*," was the embarrassing reply. And the little patient sank into a refreshing sleep.

As soon as I was able to release my hand, without risk of disturbing her, her mother supplied my place, and I returned to the drawing-room. All the fair company, however, even my newly-affianced Susan, had disappeared. But I was not long left alone. Mr. Crowdie soon rejoined me. His manner was embarrassed.

"Purkiss," he said, "the child whose life you saved is very dear to me. Ahem! You do not desire to embitter the existence you have preserved?"

I emphatically disclaimed any such intention.

"Then listen to me, Dick," resumed Mr. Crowdie. "My wife and I have arrived at the conclusion that your noble act has left an impression upon our dear girl's mind stronger than mere gratitude—to be effaced only with life."

"My good sir," I gasped.

"One moment. You are about to refer to Susan. Banish that anxiety. She is a sensible, affectionate girl, and has (I may as well mention) already assured us that no claim, no predilection of her own, shall— You understand. Permit us to welcome your alliance as the husband of my Laura Jane, and our happiness is complete."

What could I say? My affections were manifestly regarded as transferable, and they *were* transferred on the spot. I had the pleasure that very night of shaking

hands with Mrs. Crowdie as the betrothed of Laura Jane!

"Humph!" I thought, as I lay down rather tired, "three engagements in one day will satisfy my uncle that I have not been idle!"

I was up with that bird which is erroneously supposed to be the earliest of fowls, because he makes most disturbance about it, and enjoyed a glorious plunge in the limpid lake. On my way back from the bathing-house, towel in hand, I encountered Miss Adelaide. She was, I think, the third daughter, and reputed, by many, the beauty of the family, having a small classic head, regular features, and large dark eyes, into which there came, at intervals, a peculiar gleam. Like her mother, she was reserved. I hastened to greet her, and then eagerly added, "And now, pray tell me of our dear invalid? She has rested well, I hope?"

"She has rested well. And 'dear' she is, indeed, Mr. Purkiss, to all our hearts."

"You need not tell *me* that," I replied, significantly. "I can only say that, if the most devo——"

"But——"

"The most unalterable attachm——"

"Stop, I beg of you!" cried my companion. "Oh, my dear Mr. Purkiss, I have something to—to explain. There's a mistake."

"No—really? *Another!*" I muttered.

"You noticed that my dear sister clasped your hand." (I bowed gravely.) "And, when invited to say who should watch beside her, what did she reply?"

"*You*—meaning *me*."

"So my father thought, also, dear friend. But the sound deceived you both. She said '*Hugh*'—not '*you*'—and—and forgive me, she meant Sir Hugh Sagamore, to whom, it appears, the warm-hearted child has become attached."

"The sound is *not* dissimilar," I owned—a little disconcerted. "Still——"

"If you knew how sorry I am to tell you this," said the pretty Adelaide, laying her fingers on my arm. (They were white, and beautifully curved at the taper points.) "Dear Mr. Purkiss, take comfort."

"I shall endeavour to do so," I replied, in a hollow voice. "It is a blow."

"There is a balm for every wound," said Miss Adelaide, gently.

"But what kind hand shall administer it?" I asked.

The large lustrous eyes turned upon me for a moment, and were as suddenly averted. My companion was silent. She was drawing something on the gravel-terrace with her parasol, and to my eye, it took the form of a human heart, with a perforation in the larger valve. I accepted the omen.

"Miss Crowdie—Adelaide!——"

She gave a little start.

"Can I, dare I, hope that *you*, who knew so well how to alleviate the pain of this announcement, will enable me to forget it altogether?"

As I believe I have hinted before, such dialogues are confidential. I shall merely remark, that Adelaide and I returned to the house together, and that I

whispered to my sweet companion, as we entered the breakfast-parlour :

"I shall beg an audience of papa after breakfast !"

The bluff squire saved me the trouble, however, by inviting me to come and inspect a remarkable pig.

"By jingo, as my wife says," he added, "I never feel that I've done my morning's duty till I've been the round of sty and stable !"

On the way I broached the subject nearest my heart. No sooner had I mentioned the name of "Adelaide," than my host's gratified smile gave place to an almost shocked expression. He sat down upon a railing, took off his broad-leafed hat, and fanned his agitated face.

"Purkiss," he said, "were you aware—did not your uncle ever refer to—eh—my poor Ady? Don't you *know*?"

"Know—know *what*?"

"Dick, have you never observed a singular, an almost wild, glitter in that girl's eyes?"

I assented.

"It indicates, when frequent, an accession of a peculiar form of insanity, called 'kleptomania.' Have you your purse about you?"

"Purse, my dear sir! Of course——Yet, no. Why, bless me, I am sure I put it in my pocket."

"And *she* took it out," remarked Mr. Crowdie, mournfully. "No matter. It will be restored, with everything else she may lay hands on, in the course of the day. No, my dear boy, *here* the unhappy child is safe—harmless—understood. But she must never leave our roof. Console yourself. My wife shall talk

with her, and make all square. Yet, hark ye, I cannot give up the hope of calling you my son, because our plans haven't gone smooth. Dick, I offer you the prize lamb of my flock—my little Lucy. Just you come and look at her; chat with her if you like, and if you don't lose your heart in ten minutes——”

Lucy was engaged with a class of little rustics, and being unable, for the present, to come out and be engaged to *me*, we went in and joined the class.

Lucy was correcting on the slates what she had previously been dictating.

“‘Ireland is famous for Peter Turf.’ Pray, Peter Burberry, who *is* ‘Peter Turf?’” asked Lucy.

“Please, teacher, you *said* Peter Turf!” retorted Master Burberry, forcing a brown knuckle into his eye.

“True,” said the young lady, smiling. “So I did. But, the next time, suppose you spell his name ‘peat, or turf.’”

Mr. Burberry executed a backward kick—meant to represent a bow—from which my shins narrowly escaped,—and the lesson closed.

“Look, you young ones,” said the bluff squire, “I’ve got to take a sweep round the plantations. Get you home together, and order lunch exactly at half-past one. Off you go.”

Miss Lucy was rather shorter than her sisters, and possessed a perfect cloud of rich golden hair. Her manner was particularly frank and sweet, and she had a sense of humour which spoke intelligibly in her laughing blue eye.

“Papa is so funny!” she said, as we walked towards

the house. "Do you know what he expected? Ha! ha! Then I won't tell you. Come in."

A sudden resolution seized me.

"I *do* know what he expected, my dear young lady," I said, firmly; "and, so far as it rests with me, he certainly shall not be disappointed. You look disturbed. I entreat you to hear me. I was about to speak, when—— In short, you were to have become my sister. Oh, let me have the joy of bestowing upon you a far more precious title. Be my wife!"

We forgot the lunch altogether.

When Mr. Crowdie returned, we were still lingering under the trees. He walked up straight to us, looked in Lucy's blushing face, and, placing our hands together, simply remarked:—

"At last. My best hopes are realized."

My Lucy, a little agitated with all that had happened, was dismissed to lie down for an hour, while I, who had been affianced a good deal more, felt also that a little quiet meditation would restore the tone of my nerves. I accordingly sought out a little moss-covered seat, of which I knew, and there fell into a train of thought, which—owing, I take it, to the lulling whisper of the trees—ended in slumber.

Merry voices aroused me. The party had commenced croquet. Half fearing that Lucy would miss me, I hastened to the lawn. She was not there. Smothering my disappointment, I accepted a mallet and a partner—Mattie—and was soon hard at work. In one of the innumerable disgusting pauses of the game, I asked where was Lucy?

"Lucy!" exclaimed Mattie, opening her brown

eyes to their widest. "Don't you know? She's gone."

"God bless me! Gone?—gone whither?"

"To Aunt Mompesson's. For two months."

"But I—I—surely——"

"We sent to look for you, my dear Mr. Purkiss," said Mrs. Crowdie, who had quietly approached, "but the messenger found you so comfortably asleep, that he would not disturb you. We make a practice of never contradicting Mrs. Mompesson. She *would* run off with Lucy—so there's an end."

"But, your daughter—did she—didn't she——"

"She would have liked to say good-bye, but my aunt would wait no longer, and Lucy begged me to say that, if she might suggest, all that passed this morning might as well be considered as forming part of the dreams in which she heard you were indulging in the harbour. But here's Crowdie, who can tell you more."

My host bustled up, and took me by both hands, saying, with much feeling:—

"Purkiss, my good friend, I am at a loss to express the sense I feel of your flattering and most persevering efforts to ally yourself with my family. Believe me, I shall never forget them. But courage, my dear boy. I have four girls yet; and if, among these——"

"The fact is," I answered, with a smile, "some fatality seems to attend upon any exercise of choice on my part. All your children are charming. If it were not wholly out of the question to submit such young ladies to such an arbitrament, I would almost venture to propose that those who deem a prize, like myself,

worth the pains, should—ahem!—forgive me—draw lots for it.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared the squire. “A capital idea! But they needn’t *know* it, eh? Wife ’ll write their names—that is, Mattie, Ethel, and Leonora—my poor Alice is out of the race—and we’ll decide it where we stand.”

Absurd as was the plan—for I had only meant it in pleasantry—Mr. Crowdie insisted on nailing me to my own suggestion. The names were written, the lots drawn by Mr. Crowdie himself, and Mattie was the winner.

“My dear Dick, I congratulate you!” and he caught my hand. “Believe me, you have been most fortunate.”

I glanced at the unconscious Mattie, who, deserted by me, was battling away at croquet on behalf of both, and wondered what was next to be done.

“Will you”—said Mr. Crowdie—“ahem!—or—shall I?”

“*You*, by all means, my dear sir,” said I. And while I strolled with Mrs. Crowdie among her azaleas, I saw him detach Mattie from the game. Presently, and quite unexpectedly, we met them at the turn of a path. Mattie’s brown eyes were a little wider open than usual, but she was apparently resigned to her lot.

“Here, Dick,” said Mr. Crowdie, “I give you the light of my house. And, let me tell you, it is not every one who should win her from us so easily.”

I felt that I had no right to complain. Nothing could well exceed the simplicity of the process by which I *had* “won” her.

but shy. Mattie never knew how much he loved her, but *I* did; and now—oh, Mr. Purkiss! you haven't seen much of Mattie—couldn't you, if you tried very much, like somebody else instead?"

"Answer me one question first. Did your sister authorize this appeal?"

She inclined her head.

"Enough," said I, calmly. "I not only resign my claim, but, if I can in any manner forward the views of my fortunate rival, pray command me."

"Oh, how good you are! Thanks—a thousand thanks. But it will be difficult. Papa likes you so very much."

Flattery is at all times sweet, but when it proceeds from a beautiful mouth, accompanied by a bewitching smile, who can resist?

"Perhaps," I said, "some—ahem!—device might be hit upon, that might at once meet your sister's views, and preserve to papa the connection he is so good as to desire. Do you, my dear young lady, see what I mean?" (The damsel hung her head till I saw the white parting quite to the back.) "I see you do. Ethel, for your sister's sake . . . what say you, dear one?"

A few minutes later, I finished the letter to my uncle. It was not difficult. I carefully erased "*Mattie*," and substituted "*Ethel*."

I had little difficulty with the worthy squire. So long as he secured me (he was pleased to say) for one of his dear girls—he was comparatively indifferent which—and I saw that Mr. Lowry's suit was gained.

All now seemed smooth and happy. My intended

father-in-law was yet expatiating on the peculiar fitness of the choice I had eventually made, when his wife entered the room hastily, with a letter in her hand.

"Mr. Crowdie—Philip!—I must speak to you directly."

I made a movement to withdraw.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Purkiss—I did not see you. Pray remain," said the lady; "this concerns you."

"Upon my word this is most singular!" ejaculated Mr. Crowdie, after glancing over the epistle. "It would hardly be believed! Purkiss, I scarcely know how to tell you. Spifflicate me (as my wife frequently observes)"—"Oh, *Philip!*" said the lady—"if here is not *another* spoke in our wheel! Mrs. Mompesson, whom we never contradict, writes me here, in confidence, that, seeing a young stranger (yourself, Dick) here, and not knowing what his intentions might be, she had stopped, on the road, to send me this intimation that she had promised her influence with me in reference to Ethel—who is her great favourite—on behalf of Sir Edward Tottenham, who has been eagerly desiring to improve the acquaintance he made with her at the county ball. Now, my dear Dick, to offend Mrs. Mompesson is——"

"Just so, my dear sir. It must not be. To say the truth, until you fairly presented one of your fair daughters to me at the altar, I should not regard my happiness as secured."

"Oh, Dick, this must not end *so!*" said the squire, with genuine regret and feeling. "After all, there's Leonora."

"The eighth attempt, sir, may be more prosperous," I replied, rather bitterly; "let it be so. Do with me as you please. My affections have been so perpetually nipped, that I don't think they ought to be expected to bud again without some assurance that they will be allowed to blow."

"Come, that is but fair," said the squire. "Hark ye, Dick. My Leonora has no will, no fancy, except what is mine. Will you take *that* assurance? She is a dear good girl, and, though she is at this moment out for a walk, you may—yes, I am *sure* you may—consider yourself as engaged."

I bowed, and remembered, with some satisfaction, that my letter to my uncle was not yet gone. Of the fair Leonora I knew little—had never, in point of fact, addressed a single observation to that young lady. But I felt sure that I should like her. I had remarked the beautiful acquiescent disposition of these young people. Moreover, the selection had assumed that character which has immortalized the late Mr. Hobson—Leonora, or nothing. We shook hands (as before), and, subject to the young lady's approval, the matter was arranged.

Mr. Crowdie was still speaking, when Alice, the invalid, was wheeled into the room. Her father's voice and manner always, I had noticed, underwent a softening change in the presence of this his favourite child. Kissing her tenderly, he intimated to her the connection I was about to form with the family, and then, leaving us together, hurried away with his wife to meet Leonora.

I glanced at my companion. The pure and spiritual

beauty of her face was marred by an expression of pain.

"I fear you are suffering," I said.

"In mind, yes," said Alice, "but not in body. I am, in reality—Heaven be praised for it!—much better."

"Indeed. Believe me, I rejoice to hear that there is a possib——"

"I see," replied Alice, with her bright angelic smile, "that you partake the impression that has gone abroad—that I am deformed. It is not so. Patience and a change of climate are all—so says my doctor—that I need, to regain a certain, if not robust, health. But it is not of *this* I wish to speak," she added, hastily. "Oh, Mr. Purkiss, what are you about to do? Is the human heart a toy, to be passed from hand to hand—given, retaken, crushed perhaps at last—without one compassionate scruple for the treasures of true and abiding love that might have flourished there? I have seen all that has passed. You have a kind, easy—perhaps susceptible, nature. The deference we girls have been accustomed to pay to our parents' wishes, and our fond attachment to each other, have co-operated with this, and led to much of what has occurred. You have scarcely seen Leonora, never spoken to her. In spite of a cold temperament, she is a good, sweet girl, and you may doubtless win her; but to do so in a manner that would satisfy a generous, kindly nature, will require more time, and a far more delicate procedure, than you seem to consider needful."

"I accept the censure," said I, feeling rather

ashamed. "I have but to say, in extenuation, that, having lived up to this advanced period of my life, perfectly fancy-free—a fact which somewhat negatives my 'susceptibility'—I found myself surrounded by so many charms at once, that my judgment became bewildered, and proved unequal to the situation. *Now*, I see clearly. Ah, that I had had such a monitor before."

"Nay, it is not too late," she began, eagerly.

"I know it is not too late. For Leonora, I recall my absurd pretensions. They would be little short of insult. But, oh, in opening my eyes, you have shown me too much for my own peace."

"What do you mean?"

"Had I known you sooner, your wisdom, your sweetness—oh, if even now——"

"Hush! Mr. Purkiss. You are mad."

"I have been mad hitherto, but now I am sane—and wretched. See—I am going to leave you; for how can I plead? Why should you believe me? Yet, Alice, I love you—you only. I may never deserve you, sweet angel; but no one else shall ever be my wife. Farewell; and when you hear that I have made another choice, despise—forget me!"

* * * *

"My dear Dick.—Are you engaged?"

"Yours impatiently,

"RICHARD PURKISS."

(Ans.)

"My dear Uncle.—Busily engaged. I have been affianced to eight of your fair friends, and have now

to seek your blessing on my union with the beloved
ninth!

“Your dutiful nephew,
“DICK.”

The marriage-feast passed off admirably. I was not alone in my glory. Sir Hugh Sagamore and Mr. Lowry found brides the same day. Adelaide and the rest were bridesmaids. A diamond bracelet, thirteen laced pocket-handkerchiefs, two fans, and a silver spoon, were mysteriously missed, and as mysteriously restored, at night, to their owners.

My sweet wife and I returned to England last week. Dear Alice is in perfect health, and little Master Dick is to be christened on Tuesday. We invite you all.





LOVE AND GLORY.

MY acquaintance with Mr. Tiddijohn commenced with an abruptness that might have startled a pilgrim less familiar than myself with the ways of this remarkable world.

"You are admiring my wife, sir," said Mr. Tiddijohn, walking suddenly up within six inches of my person. (We were on a voyage from the port of Southampton to that of Cowes, and the sea was—I am not aware if the expression be technical—wobbly.)

"Sir," I replied, "if the lady in the striped Garibaldi be your wife, it is impossible *not* to admire the composure, the grace, with which she adapts herself to the singular motions of—of this—uneasy vess—Bless me, how she rolls!"

"The sea *is* lively, sir," said Mr. Tiddijohn. "But the spirit of my wife soars superior to the hailments common to humanity, and never—— Eh! Yes, my dear. . . . Excuse me, sir. . . . Here, steward-*ess!*"

. And he darted away.

"She is better, sir," resumed Mr. Tiddijohn, presently returning.

"I am rejoiced to hear it, sir," said I.

"Glory loses no lustre on these occasions, sir," continued my friend, a punchy little man, with a curious mixture of stateliness and vulgarity.

"Glory, sir, has more to do with heart than stomach," I observed.

"You are right, sir," said Mr. Tiddijohn. "Nevertheless, half a dozen carraway-seeds would have done no harm."

"I beg your pardon?"

"They might have absolved her from this necessity, sir," said Mr. Tiddijohn. "In another, the situation would have been humbling. Glory makes everything attractive."

"Even sea-sickness?" said I, laughing.

"I cannot join in your mirth, sir," replied my queer little companion, drawing up his squat figure to its full height. "When I see such a being stretched, limp, and pale, upon a saltish bench, rejecting the offices of friendship, and—and a good deal more—and with a countenance expressive of the most profound indifference as to the eventualities of the voyage—I ask myself, *can* this be Glory?"

"Glory?"

"Glory, sir. *My* Glory. My wife's name is Gloriana. Our family name is Tiddijohn."

I bowed.

"I have the honour, sir," resumed my friend, "to be the husband of that lady, on whom I noticed that you were bestowing very marked attention. I feel it

—I always do—as a compliment to myself. I accept your homage in the best spirit. I took the liberty of addressing you, contrary to the customs of the circle in which we move, for the purpose of inviting you to express, in the frankest and most unreserved manner, your opinion of my wife.”

I glanced at Mrs. Tiddijohn. It was an unlucky moment. She was rising on her elbow, while an attendant sylph, or naiad It is no matter, for I was already in a position to confess, with all sincerity, that the wife of my curious little friend was unquestionably a very beautiful woman. It is easy to understand, further, that the beauty that can vindicate itself under such adverse conditions must be of no mean order.

“ ‘Gloriana!’ ” I thought. “Come, she is worthier of the name than that swearing, boxing, iron-hearted masculine flirt upon whom Sidney’s poet-soul bestowed it.”

She had resumed her recumbent position, and I could see the colour timidly revisiting her smooth fair cheek, as if it were not quite certain of its tenure. Her large liquid dark-blue eyes were fixed upon the hurrying clouds, and she seemed indifferent even to the fact that an object resembling a golden thirty-two-pound shot, called, I am told, a “chignon,” and carried at the back of the head, had burst its cements, and hung, a glittering wave, across the arm of the bench on which she reclined.

Mr. Tiddijohn was watching me with an expression of profound content.

“You are enchanted, sir,” he said, at last.

“The spell is powerful, I must own. But, excuse me, does not the lady at this instant need——”

“I dursn’t—that is, I cannot approach her,” said Mr. Tiddijohn. “I have this moment received a warning glance—familiar to me—and which I interpret thus : ‘Keep your distance ; you have been smoking.’ On atondong, as we have yet half an hour to Cowes, I will, with your permission, relate to you one of the most remarkable stories you ever heard, and afterwards present you to its heroine.”

“I embrace both offers, sir,” I replied, “and this cigarette, whose flavour will not survive its extinction above a minute, will not, I trust, prevent my being admitted to the honour you propose. Pray begin.”

Mr. Tiddijohn placed himself in a comfortable position, commanding a good view of his wife, and, in well-chosen language, excepting when, for a moment or two, he became excited by the theme, favoured me with the following narrative.

“Born, sir,” commenced Mr. Tiddijohn, “in Quantock-street, Simmery-axe, transferred at an early age, about ten months, to the ancient feudal residence of the Dooks of Brandon in Humpshire, I passed my sunny childhood among the streams and woodlands of that beautiful domain.”

“You are connected with the family ?” I asked..

“I *am*, sir,” replied Mr. Tiddijohn, calmly ; “my mother was wife of the duke’s under-butler. She subsequently became housekeeper. His grace, as all the world is aware, resided principally in a modest lodging in Paris, and my mother’s chief duties, for many years, consisted in admitting little groups of

people (who thought they were taking pleasure) at one end of the picture-corridors for sixpence apiece, and dismissing them peremptorily at the other, for a shilling.

"My excellent mother found this occupation so profitable, that she conceived the idea of bringing me up to the same, and I had already mastered the pictorial history of the noble Brandons, down to the ninth century, when—you'll hardly believe your hears, sir" (Mr. Tiddijohn was becoming excited), "a horder come for to sell the 'ole lot of 'em down to the Lady Halithea, who died unmarried, of 'oooping-cough, haged nine. Hafter this sackereligious act, nothing prospered. A wing of the mansion was burned down, tenants bolted, hagents come to grief, the dook died, and my mother gave warning, which was took.

"She had saved a good lump of money, sir—so, at least, I thought it *then*," continued Mr. Tiddijohn, "nigh five hundred pound. My father proposed to take charge of this sum, to add to it the whole of his savings (which proved to be nine-pound-seven), take the whole to America, and invest it in the purchase of land. My mother and I were to return, for the present, to Simmery-axe, and jine him—my guv'nor, that is—at a futur period.

"He promised to write, and kep' his word ; but he took ten years to do it, and then he only mentioned that he would write again. I was, by this time, about twenty, and thought I should like to do something for a living, seeing it wasn't very probable that my guv'nor, and the five hundred pound odd, had come to any good. My mother asked me what I should like

best to be. I made answer, 'A traveller.' You see, I had read a many books of travel, Sindbad, Peter Wilkins, Robinson Crusoe, ansetterer, and had a great wish to visit foreign lands. We had a relation in the dry goods line at Liverpool, and when my mother wrote telling him my wishes, and asking his advice, he, Mr. Normicutt, replied, 'All right. Send him to me.'

"Well, sir, I took an affecting leave of my mother, promising to return in five year at the outside, and to send her, in the mean time, little tokens of my safety and remembrance—a diamond, some purses of sequins, a hundred monkeys, or so—and off I started in high spirits for Liverpool.

"The event did not justify my expectations. Five minutes' conversation with Mr. Normicutt revealed the fact that my journeyings were to be solely in the interests of the Messrs. Sprounce and Alkali, manufacturers of fancy soaps, and to be limited, for the present, to the three northern counties of my native land.

"Sir, it was a disappointment. But I resigned myself, like a man, to the course destiny had prepared, and for three years did my very best to propagate the illusion that Messrs. Sprounce and Alkali's soaps were better than anybody else's, notwithstanding that that spirited firm were content to supply them at one-third the usual cost. Such extraordinary success attended my representations, that I was at length taken into partnership, and was doing very fairly, when my mother received a second communication from America.

"It was written by a lawyer in Memphis, and

informed us that my father was dead. He died, sir, from over-excitement, occasioned by an extraordinary stroke of good fortune. He had, it seemed, invested his money in the purchase of a piece of land, near which a town of considerable size was intended to be built. The site proved unhealthy. The town went elsewhere, and my father's property sank to zero. Unwilling to report this result to us, he had managed to support himself in various ways, until some remarkable discoveries in the land immediately adjoining his own, induced him to attempt similar researches. The result may be told in three short words. But, sir, they are significant. *He struck oil.* When informed by the agent that he was realizing one thousand pounds a day, he fainted, and when, after a short but severe illness, he awoke to the consciousness that one hundred and twenty thousand pounds had been offered for the produce of his land, he merely ejackerlated, 'Take it,'—and expired."

Mr. Tiddijohn was silent for a moment; then, after a glance at his wife, resumed :

"I was a rich man now, sir, but I cannot say that I was a happier one. I could now travel, if I liked, in reality, and I did. I embarked on the salt seas, and sailed, sir, for Bullone. The voyage occupied two hours and a half. Were there any overland route to England, I should certainly prefer it. After some time I endeavoured to induce my mother to jine me; but she wrote that she was wedded to Simmery-axe, and also to the curate of a chapel there, who had about nineteen children, and wanted a motherly woman to take the place of his deceased partner.

"Left alone in the world, I returned to England, and took a handsome lodging at the West-end. What shall I do next? I asked.

" 'Marry,' said my mother, who was nursing her fourteenth step-child, 'and surround yourself with such cherubs as these.' (Her eldest 'cherub' was six-and-twenty.)

"I had no objection to marry; and, indeed, had a secret suspicion that that was what I wanted. 'Man, the 'ermit,' you are aware, sir, pined, till woman smiled. But it was not so easy to find *my* mate. Whether a childhood passed among the noble Brandons had elevated my taste, or whether I had gleaned a little bit of romance from my books, I cannot say, but I felt that not one of the young ladies I had hitherto known could fill the aching void in this buzzom. Coarse, sir, coarse. Sometimes showy, but coarse in grain.

"My great amusement was to stroll in the Park with my friend Jack Prosser (for, though I was a swell now, I did not cut my old mates of the commercial-room), and speculate upon which of the beautiful delicate young creatures that flew past us, sitting, lightly as snow-flakes, upon their graceful steeds, and rosy with exercise and mirth, should be my choice, provided I could get her! But these were all dreams. I had, at that time, sir, no position in society, except that of lolling over the rails in company with the Earl of Griffinhoof, or my Lord Viscount Fizgig, whom I didn't know.

"It was of little use that Prosser reminded me of my wealth.

" 'There's *you*,' said my friend, kindly, 'with your

five thousand a year, that could buy up half the nobles and swells (if their debts was paid) that's prancing about here; and you're in the dumps because you can't catch a countess at once!

"‘I don't particularly want a countess,' says I, 'for that wouldn't make me a count; and I shouldn't like to have to call my wife "my lady." All I ask, Prosser, is a lovely, sweet, angelic—— Hush—look here!'

"There passed us, at this moment, a gentleman and lady on horseback. The gentleman had large grizzled moustaches, and a proud fierce look, though, at the time they came by, he was laughing at something his companion had said. The lady was nearest to us—so near that I could have touched the amethyst top of her delicate riding-whip. She turned her face full towards me for a second; but that was enough. The next thing I was conscious of was a pull at my sleeve. Prosser was hailing me as if I had been five hundred yards off.

"‘I say! Hoy! Tiddijohn? What's the matter now? Halloa!'

"I rubbed my eyes, as if waking.

"‘Jack,' I gasped, 'did you see *that*? Was it human?'

"‘Human! What d'ye mean?' said Jack. 'I say, old fellow, collect yourself; they're a-starin' at us.'

"‘I *am* collected—all of a heap,' I said, faintly attempting a joke. 'But Jack—that girl—she shot me!'

"‘*Shot* you?' ejaculated Prosser.

"‘I felt it pass through me,' I replied (and so I

had)—‘in at my eyes, through my heart, out at my toes.’

“‘It’s well it’s gone,’ said Jack, gruffly.

“‘But I feel it still. Jack, if that’s love, I’m taken sudden, and fatally.’

“‘I hope not,’ says Jack. ‘That would be a bad job, *that* would, for you’ve no chance *there*.’

“‘Eh? What? You know her?’

“‘Very well,’ said Jack. ‘Our people supplies her with lace. She has just chosen a ——

“‘Her name?’

“‘Caliver. She’s the only daughter and heiress of General Sir Sampson Caliver—that proud old military swell she was riding with. He’s a very unpleasant card, *I* can tell you, and precious short with everybody but her. They’re in tip-top society, and he wants her to marry a dook.’

“‘What dook?’ said I, bewildered. ‘I’ll tear her from that dook’s arms! I’ll——’

“‘Don’t be an ass,’ said Prosser, kindly. ‘It’s no use, dear old boy. Why, she was a-quizzing you as she passed! It’s that weskit and cravat. I’ve often ‘inted that you dress too loud.’

“‘Quizzing! . . . Loud! . . . Prosser!’ I gasped, ‘you don’t understand. Lady—princess—queen—whatever she may be, I love her all the same. I can’t help her station. If she was a barefooted beggar, I’d marry her, and she should ride in a charrot of gold. As it is, I shall love her, secret, for the rest of my life, and leave my fortune to the dook’s second son. For legal purposes, I desire to know her Christian name.’ I took out my note-book.

“ ‘Gloriana,’ said Jack.

“ ‘Glori——’ (my trembling fingers almost refused to write her beautiful name). ‘Prosser,’ I continued, ‘I want to be alone. Good-bye, old boy, for the present. We meet to-night, as usual—half-past nine—Harmonic Hedgehogs.’ And we parted.

“I walked across the Park. It has been said that, in moments of great excitement, fancy plays us all manner of tricks, and I wasn’t at all surprised to see, in fiery characters six foot high, written on the air, ‘Approaching Marriage in ’Igh Life.—We rejoice to learn that a marriage has been arranged between the lovely and accomplished daughter of General Sir Sampson Caliver, G.C.H., K.C.B., and his Grace the Dook of Ampassy-Etcetera.’ Well, may they be blest! O Gloriana! beautiful phantom! I have seen you, loved you. From this hour forth, you sit, though you don’t know it, enshrined in my heart of hearts. No vile unworthy thought shall ever approach your throne—no selfish hope, no vain desire. Thus only can I be worthy to cherish your sweet image, to worship you, my fairy queen—my goddess-bride—my——

“ ‘Hi! hi! there! *Hah!*’ rang in my ears; and the next moment I was flying, head over heels, I knew not whither! I suppose I was unconscious for a moment, for, on recovering, I found myself on the ground, in the ride, with my head on somebody’s knee, the centre of a large circle of people, on foot and horseback. A sort of altercation seemed to be going on.

“ ‘Atrocious carelessness!’ ‘But he was repeatedly

called to.' 'Culpable disregard of human life!' 'Galloping swell—little *he* cares,' &c.

"'The gentleman has tendered his card and address, and desired that this person be looked to,' said one of the horsemen, quietly.

"'Yes, five shillin's for a cab, and take away the dead 'un,' growled a bystander. 'Take t'other into custody, *I* say. If 't had been one of *us*, he'd ha' been in the station-'ouse by now.'

"'You had better ride on with your daughter, Sir Sampson,' said the quiet voice, 'and let *me* look to this.'

"I raised myself with some difficulty. Sir Sampson, calm and haughty, and Gloriana, pale and frightened, stood before me in the midst of the excited mob. I cast one glance upon her.

"'Hear me,' I said. 'Will you be silent, and hear me? The fault was *mine*—solely mine. This gentleman was in no way to blame. I want neither his card nor his assistance.'

"'I should think not!' bawled the voice of Jack Prosser, who, attracted by the hubbub, had run back to see what was 'up.' 'Assistance? nothing of the sort! My friend has ten thousand a year!' shouted Jack, in a voice that might have been heard at Charing-cross.

"'Hush! hush! Jack, and get me away,' I said, faintly; and, with one more glance at Gloriana, relapsed into insensibility.

"I had received a severe blow on the head, and was much shaken besides. The doctor feared concussion of the brain, and kept me very quiet and low;

but I was better on the fourth day, and was then informed that a servant had called every day with inquiries, and, on the last occasion, had left a note. I glanced at the monogram on the seal, and tore it open:—

“‘107, Hyde Park-square.

“‘Dear Sir. It is with sincere pleasure that I learn that you have sustained no serious injury from the accident, occasioned (I must frankly confess) by *my* carelessness, but which, with most gentlemanlike feeling, you attributed to your own. My daughter unites with me both in condolence and congratulation. Trusting that an acquaintance so inauspiciously begun may ripen into an intercourse of a far more agreeable character, I remain, dear sir, your faithful servant,

“‘SAMPSON CALIVER.’

“Whoever taught Sir Sampson the delicate Italian hand in which this note was written, would have been highly pleased to notice how well the gallant general had retained, through all the haste and scramble of military life, the light, firm touch of youth! He would have remarked, further, that Sir Sampson preferred a crow-quill, and scented his pink despatches with the fragrance of the jessamine. My heart told me *who* had written that note, and who had not objected to write that she wished our acquaintance might improve.

“It did improve, sir. Before I had left my room, Sir Sampson called on me in person, and sat for nearly ten minutes, talking very agreeably. He seemed much struck with the luxury and elegance of my apartments, and observed that it needed nothing

but a few Rembrances and Leonardodavinchys, to make it perfect. As I didn't know for certain what he meant, and thought it might be some new kind of bath, or boot-jack, I assented, and said I would get half a dozen or so the first time I could stroll out towards Soho. Sir Sampson smiled, and nearly knocked me down a second time, by pressing me to come to lunch on a certain day, when his daughter would be ('From home,' I thought) delighted to show me some pictures, which might guide my choice.

"We are approaching Cowes. I shall not, therefore, attempt to describe the tumult of emotion in which I passed the intervening time. I was, however, sufficiently collected to reform my wardrobe. My costume on the eventful day was quietness itself, being, according to the fastidious Jack, compounded of the undertaker and the parish clerk.

"All that morning passed in a species of dream. I knew that I was presented to Gloriana—that I sat and talked with her and her father—goodness only knows what I said—and that, after a trying progress through the picture-gallery, in which the rich music of Gloriana's voice kept me entirely unconscious of the meaning of her observations, we sat down to a sumptuous lunch. A fourth cover had been laid. I supposed it was for the dook. But we didn't wait for him, and he didn't come.

"All this time, sir, though I was at the very 'eight of 'appiness, I felt that I was a fool. She could never be more or less to *me*—poor half-educated fancy-soap man—than an object of distant adoration, and, when my idol was withdrawn, where should *I* be? I put

on a strong resolution, and, filling a bumper of port, I drank *her* health and Sir Sampson's, and then said I must go.

"'But, my dear Mr.—Mr. Tiddijohn,' said the general, 'this must not be your last visit. We are not so easily satisfied. You must dine with us, say to-morrow, if your numerous engagements permit. You have not yet heard my daughter's voice, you know.'

"I looked at her so quickly that I caught her knitting her beautiful brow at her father, as if she didn't quite endorse his invitation. So I began stammering an excuse. But Sir Sampson would not listen. He put my numerous engagements aside in no time, and I found myself, on the following day, handing Gloriana in to dinner. The same mysterious cover was laid for a fourth party, but nobody came. The dook, I thought takes it very coolly!

"Miss Caliver was gentle and patronising—sometimes, I thought, just a trifle sarcastic—but what could I expect? If you come to that, what business had I there at all?

"After she had left us, there was a pause. I was afraid Sir Sampson was about to return to the subject of the Rembrances and Something-vinchys, which I had discovered were pictures, but, instead of that, he suddenly inquired: 'Pray, Mr. Tiddijohn, do you pay frequent visits to your American estates?'

"I replied that I had not an acre of land of my own, but that I had considerable sums invested in the United States securities, which returned a large income.

“‘I have always been of opinion,’ resumed my host, ‘that a moderate income—say ten thousand a year—is the most enjoyable and the least embarrassing fortune that an English gentleman can possess.’

“I remarked that I should be perfectly willing at any time to risk the embarrassments attendant upon such a state of things, but hardly expected that the opportunity would present itself.

“The general slightly raised his eyebrows.

“‘I—excuse me, sir,’ he said, “I do not wish to be indiscreet, but I certainly heard—from whom was it, some friend of yours, Lord Fizgig?—that you were precisely in the enviable situation I have mentioned?’

“I replied, frankly, that the partiality of Lord Fizgig, whom I knew very well (by sight), had perhaps exaggerated my possessions. I had six thousand a year, my mother having contented herself with *one*, which would ultimately revert to me.

“Sir Sampson looked a little grave, but seemed gratified by this candid statement, and shook hands with me across the corner of the table.

“‘You will excuse, my young friend,’ he said, kindly, ‘the interest I—and I think I must say my daughter also—feel in the prosperity of one who has given such proofs of a high and noble nature. And permit me, while on this subject, to express my astonishment that Mr. Tiddijohn has not hitherto formed some matrimonial alliance befitting his wealth and station.’

“Mr. Tiddijohn’s heart gave a slight bound. Does he, *can* he, recognise the possibility of my contending

for such a prize as he speaks of—as—as, for instance, his own peerless child?

“I hesitated, and mumbled something in my frank way about uneducated tastes, humble desires, &c.

“Come, come, my good friend, that won’t do, you know,” said the general, good-humouredly; ‘nobility has claims; so has wealth. Many a titled damsel (did she know your personal worth as well as we) would willingly exchange her ancient name for that of Tiddijohn. But perhaps you do not care for titles and ancient lineage?’

“I honestly avowed that I cared for neither. To possess the object of one’s idola—that is to say, preference—was, in my opinion, the climax of human felicity.

“‘And such an idolatrous preference you have formed, eh, Tiddijohn?’ said the general, with a smile. ‘Ah! you hesitate. You colour. How is this? Come, I am an old man of the world; you are a young one. We are not upon even terms, unless I am as candid as yourself. Tiddijohn, *you love my daughter.*’

“I started from my chair.

“‘General!—Sir Sampson—your daughter? So wild—so presumptuous a hope——’

“‘Would be perfectly natural,’ interrupted the general, coolly. ‘Sit down, my boy. The claret is with you.’

“I sat down as if in a dream.

“‘But, sir—I—I thought—the dook——’

“‘The dook be hanged,’ said the general. ‘Never shall he marry child of mine. If there be one quality

in the youthful character more revolting than another, it is parsimony. Give me waste, give me extravagance, but spare me avarice ! Tiddijohn, I will let you into a family secret. It will, of course, go no further. Yourself, the dook, Gloriana, and I—*we four*—alone possess that secret. The necessity of surrounding my beloved child with all the luxuries her station, her beauty, her grace and accomplishments, imperatively demand, has involved me in considerable pecuniary difficulty. As a condition of her marriage with the dook, I was compelled to stipulate that a certain sum—a trifle to him, but of some importance to a mere old soldier like *me*—fifteen thousand pounds, should be devoted to the payment of debts, chiefly (bear in mind) incurred for his future wife. His grace refused. The match was thereupon formally broken off; but to satisfy my child that I had done all that an affectionate parent could, I informed his grace that a cover would be laid for him as usual at my table for a certain period, and that his appearance within that time might intimate acceptance of my terms. This very day the limit has expired. Gloriana is free. Do you understand me ? *Free!*

“For the moment, I hardly did understand him. As my thoughts disentangled themselves, I began to discover that the freedom of Gloriana was a first step in the direction of my desires. The second appeared to be a cheque on my bankers for fifteen thousand pounds. That might be managed. What was it in comparison with *her* ? The next step presented the real difficulty. How was she to be won ? With other cheques ? Hout on the thought !

“‘I have said enough,’ resumed Sir Sampson, ‘to show you, Tiddijohn, that, supposing my conjecture to be correct, you will have no opposition to fear from *me*, provided my little stipulation be met in a corresponding spirit of candour and liberality. To own the truth, I fear you may encounter a more serious obstacle in the young lady. The dook had some fascinating qualities, and——But courage. Try your luck. You have my best wishes, and always my good word. But for twenty times the little advantage *I* shall reap by it, I would not force the inclinations of my child.’

“I could not wish those words unsaid. And yet they sounded like the death-warrant of my hopes. ‘Try my luck! *I*? With a woman who had refused more offers (so Prosser had assured me) than she was years old! I had almost made up my mind to own that I had not courage enough for such an attempt, when the general observed:

“‘I comprehend your modest doubts, my good friend; but, I think I see a way’ He paused a moment. ‘Yes—it might answer. Would you mind my kicking you downstairs?’

“‘Sir!’ I exclaimed, thinking he was mad.

“‘Or pitching you out of the window? It’s quite low.’

“‘I don’t understand you, Sir Sampson.’

“‘At all events, you will allow me to make use of any terms I please? Come, you won’t mind *that*,’ said the general, cheerfully. ‘*This* is our plan, you see. Gloriana has in her character a strong spice of romance. If she found that, owing to your addresses

being unacceptable to *me*, I treated you with unmerited harshness, all the feelings of her generous nature would be at once enlisted in your favour. The more I raged and stormed, the more she would soothe and appeal. An interest once excited in her, who can say to what it might grow? Eh, what do you say?’

“Bewildered with the suddenness of the proposal, dazzled with the hope of winning, by any means, that exquisite treasure, I somehow consented, before I well knew what I was doing.

“‘Strike while the iron’s hot,’ I remember Sir Sampson saying. ‘But, first, one more glass to our success.’ And he poured out two glasses of something that tasted to me like liquid fire. It gave me courage, however, and, at the general’s suggestion, I marched into the drawing-room alone, determined to stake my fate upon a single throw. Gloriana was sitting at a small table at the far end of the superb room, the light of a reading-lamp falling upon her queen-like face, and glistening on the golden spikes of the wreath she wore.

“I remember making three or four strides towards her, and then falling, in a sort of lump, on the floor. I remember uttering a wild rhapsody of prayers, vows, and protestations. I remember Miss Caliver rising, with an expression of unfeigned alarm, and making for the bell. That, being embarrassed by my prostrate body, she paused, and that I took advantage of that fortuitous circumstance to grasp the skirt of her train, and renew my vows. That, thereupon, she screamed aloud. That the general burst into the room, and, without hesitation, collared me on the

spot, branding me as 'drunken clown,' 'insolent beggar,' &c., and upbraiding me with this base return for the kindness and hospitality I had received.

" 'You—you—a bag fellow—a dealer in soap-suds—presume to love my daughter? Out of my house, miscreant, or——'

" 'Patience, papa—*dear* papa!' said my beautiful mistress, interposing. 'He meant no harm. Oh, let him go! See how pale he looks! And he only frightened me a very little.'

" 'How!' roared the foaming general. 'You plead for him? Minion! You—you care for him?'

" 'No, no!' exclaimed my beloved. 'I hate him!'

" 'Then here goes!' shouted the general. And he threw up the window. Gloriana shrieked, and cast herself between us.

" 'Papa, papa, this is cruel and wicked! You shall not harm this gentleman—if he be one. I will protect him with my life!'

" 'So, so,' began Sir Sampson. But by this time I had regained my scattered senses. I rose.

" 'Stop, if you please,' I said, with a voice so calm that it really sounded, to myself, as if somebody else was speaking. 'Let me put an end to this. Madam, I trust you will pardon a gentleman—if he be one—for having for an instant, in his humble but honest adoration, forgotten the reserve due to your feelings and his own. Sir Sampson, will you favour me with a moment's conversation elsewhere?'

" I bowed to Gloriana, and the general, looking rather disturbed, led the way to his study.

" 'Well, my dear fellow,' he began, as soon as the

door was closed, 'what's the matter? All was going smoothly enough. You noticed how she came round?'

"'I noticed one thing, sir, which seems to have escaped *you*,' I answered. 'Miss Caliver announced that she hated me—'hate' was the word. I love her, and not a whit the less for her honest declaration; but I no longer seek her hand. For her sake, I shall go unmarried to the grave. Sir Sampson, I owe you something for your intended good offices. It was my declared purpose to bequeath my whole fortune to the second son of your daughter's marriage with the dook. If I apportion fifteen thousand of that fortune to meet the pressing needs of her father, I shall but be anticipating, by so much, the benefit I intended for her and hers. Accept it freely, and if it smooth the way to a renewal of the ducal match, I—I shall endeavour—to—to rejoin—'

"The general caught my hand. He was much agitated, and I saw that a powerful struggle was in progress between his better feelings and his need.

"'You are a generous fellow, Tiddijohn,' he said, at length, 'and I regret . . . Well, well, my good friend, I accept your noble offer.' And the poor general hung his head as the last words died on his lips.

"Well, sir, you may suppose that this exciting scene told severely on my spirits. Foreign travel was recommended, and I returned to Bullone, determined—not to forget Gloriana—that was impossible—but to think of her as little as I could, and never to look at an English paper if I could help it, especially that part of it which expresses the editor's ecstasy at the im-

pending marriage of two exalted personages he never saw in his life, and who don't care twopence about him.

"Six months had passed, when, as I was one day walking on the quay, there landed, from the Folkstone steamer, a party that attracted my attention. It consisted of two ladies in deep mourning, a distinguished-looking gent, with uncommon fine beard and moustaches (who seemed very attentive to the younger lady, and carried her shawls and little bag), and a maid-servant. As they passed me, the young lady's veil blew aside. GLORIANA!

"I staggered back out of the way; but our eyes had met. She stopped short with an expression of joy, and stepped hastily towards me, holding out both her little hands.

"'Dear Mr. Tiddijohn, this is, indeed, fortunate! Aunt, let me present you to this kind friend of—of my poor——' She burst into tears.

"Her aunt came to the rescue, and in a few moments I was made aware that the general had died suddenly a short time since, leaving among his papers a memorandum recording his transaction with me; his earnest gratitude for what he termed my generosity; and his deep regret that all his subsequent endeavours to trace me out had failed.

"'You will come and see us, dear good friend, said Gloriana, smiling through her tears. 'Here is our address in Paris. Come *soon*.'

"'If—if the dook has no objection,' I stammered, glancing at the male member of the party, who had been a silent, and, as I thought, stern and gloomy witness of the scene.

“‘The dook!’ exclaimed Gloriana.

“‘This gentleman——’

“‘Hush, dear Mr. Tiddijohn. That is our German courier, Adolf Krauss!’

“‘Ho,’ said I. ‘Then I *will* come to Paris.’

“And so I did. And here is Cowes, but there is time, sir, to present you to my wife. My love, my Glory, let me introduce to you my friend, Mr. ——— Humph! our fellow-traveller.”





THE HORROR IN THE HOUSE.

IN TWO PARTS—PART I.

AND were you near it? Could you see it—touch it—feel it, grandpapa?”

“Nay; I trust not, my dear! But come—you shall have the story. One caution first. Since I have occupied this comfortable chair, as surprising-story-teller and frightener-in-ordinary, have I ever enticed your young imaginations beyond the limits of reason, and left them there? Have I exacted a blind belief in fairies? Have I detailed frightful experiences of my own in the matter of conversable spectres—and then fobbed you off with an after-dinner dream? Have I not, on the contrary, been fastidious to a fault—nay, sometimes positively tiresome, in respect of dates, names, and even numbers? Don’t you, in short, believe everything I have ever told you?”

“Everything—everything!” was the reply.

“Except—except,” put in one of the party, “the monster twelve feet high that you met, after dark,

walking in a back-street in Brixton—because he was too shy to take exercise in the daytime.”

“Yes, yes—except the giant,” chorused the circle.

“If you don’t believe my giant—my own, my only giant—my truest of all,” said grandpapa, sensibly affected, and hitching his chair a little apart, “there is an end of the matter. Carrie! my snuff-box and the paper.”

“I believe him, grandpapa!” squeaked a small agitated voice: “it was only Sophy that didn’t.”

“No, no, grandpapa—only Sophy!” echoed the fickle multitude, throwing the popular leader over without further ceremony. “We believe everything you say.”

“Humph! We—e—ell,” said grandpapa, grudgingly accepting the rather liberal concession, and but half-pacified for his maligned monster—“now, mark me. You will have to attend carefully to what I am going to relate. The circumstances are peculiar; and the string of events which form my story, though now nearly forgotten—except by *me*—attracted at the time an amount of interest rarely centering in any occurrence of domestic life.

“Now for the ghost!

“You have already imagined the dwelling in which a mysterious Horror would naturally fix its abode: a huge gray pile, half-abandoned, and a good deal in want of substantial repair—resonant and rotten—buried among old howling trees—chimneys choked with jackdaws—underground passage from the beer-cellar filled up, terminus uncertain—a western chamber nailed up for fifty years, haunted, murderous,

with remarkable stains—the whole to be let, with immediate possession, at five pounds less than nothing, and thanks to the plucky tenant. Do you recognise the picture, Carrie?”

“Yes—yes, beautiful, grandpapa!”

“Dismiss it! Such stereotyped ghost-nurseries have not a brick in common with *my* mansion. No; the house I am to speak of was, and still is, the central one of a pleasant, cheerful, breezy crescent of forty-five sister-tenements—built upon a noble terrace overlooking park-like pleasure-grounds, shaded with the walnut and horse-chesnut, the poplar and the pine, and within taste of the salt-sweet breath of that blue girdle of dancing waters, over which our French friends propose, one of these days, to skip, in seven minutes and a half, and swallow us up, regulars, militia, and all, even before our riflemen can form.

“No. 23, Gayland Terrace, only differed from the other numbers in being larger and more commodious. Some years before my first remembrance of the place, it had passed into the possession of Mr. Archbold, a wealthy merchant and shipowner of Birkenhead, who furnished it in a style of surpassing magnificence, and adopted it as his regular summer resort. The death, however, of a widowed sister, Mrs. Annesley, who resided with him—an event which occurred in their second season—gave him a distaste to the spot; and placing the house, with all it contained, in the hands of the nearest agent, the merchant returned to his usual home. Sumptuous fittings and moderate rent insured a constant occupation; and in the seven years

that succeeded Mr. Archbold's departure, four families in turn inhabited the mansion—two for a season each, one for two, and one for three successive years. All these, especially the latest tenant, Mr. Upton, quitted it with evident reluctance; that gentleman even leaving with regret the mansion which had witnessed the illness and death of a beloved daughter.

"No. 23 was vacant when I first took cognizance of Gayland Terrace, but the notice to let speedily disappeared—the chimneys smoked—the windows opened—flowers blushed in the balcony, while silver voices and laughter betrayed the presence of fairer flowers within. A lady, with five daughters, had taken the house. Their name was Callender. The husband and father was captain and part owner of an East Indiaman, had already realized a handsome independence, and was at this time on his voyage home.

"A brighter group I never saw. Mother and children had all the same clear, dark complexion, night-black tresses, and brown luminous eyes—gipsy-beauty refined—and what can be lovelier? Pleasant voices, and silver laughter! I hear them still, as I linger with my hoop beneath their window, waiting impatiently for my chosen lady of the band—Bud May. Now there is a snatch of merry music, as though some one had skipped to the piano, and been presently chased away—a silence, a whisper, and then a shower of rosebuds on my head, foretelling of my saucy May! In truth, they were like a knot of happy children, home for the holidays—mamma the leading playmate. Through some neighbours, I had got to know them, and being of a hide-and-seek,

battledore-and-shuttlecock age, our acquaintance in a few days ripened into intimacy.

"Rose, Lily, Violet (they were all named after flowers), Poppy, and May—each of them was charming, after her particular manner. Bud Violet, I think, was the greatest favourite; Bud Rose was the titular belle; Lily and Poppy were darlings; but the real queen of my affections was, as I have hinted, Bud May, who was, besides, the merriest of the band.

"Ah, me, my children! I must go out of the sunshine, and take you with me, if you will be content with a sad tale, truly told.

"What is that on your forehead, my sweet May?" asked her mamma, suddenly, one morning, as my favourite entered, and sat down to breakfast.

"May passed her hand across her brow, and looked up brightly.

"Ah, it's gone!" continued her mother, laughing.

"What was it, mamma? A wasp?"

"A frown, my love, and such a one as I never saw on any forehead yet, least of all my May's," replied Mrs. Callender, with a rather puzzled expression.

"May, on her part, looked thoughtful and somewhat troubled, but quickly resumed her usual demeanour; and nothing occurred for several days, till, one morning, Nurse Goodes, while attending on her mistress's toilet, hemmed and spoke: 'I beg your pardon, ma'am, but have you noticed Miss May?'

"Noticed her? *Especially?* No. Why do you inquire, nurse?"

"She grows thin, ma'am, that's certain; but she eats and drinks, and sleeps and plays as usual. I

can't make out that the dear child is ill—yet, somehow, she's not herself. For days together she will seem much as usual, then, again, all in a moment——'

"Nurse stopped.

"'What do you mean?'

"'There comes a look upon her that makes me quiver!' said nurse, with a perceptible tremor. 'I never see such a thing—I never did!'

"'Good Heavens, nurse!' exclaimed the startled mother, recalling the frown at breakfast. 'What can have affected her?'

"'It's odd,' replied Nurse Goodes; 'but she doesn't seem to know it herself! I wish, ma'am, you would come and look at her sometimes at night. I see the expression more strongly then, and sometimes she speaks a word or two I cannot understand.'

"Her mistress promised to do so, and kept anxious watch upon her darling the entire day besides; but May was gayer than ever, and gave her no opportunity for remark.

"I passed that afternoon, which was wet, in the house with my young friends, and we had a game at hide-and-seek, during which May contrived the most ingenious 'hide' of the day, being rooted out at last in a great apartment on the ground-floor, in which there was a bed of extraordinary size. Upon this couch the baffled hunters had sat down more than once in consultation, not dreaming that the crafty little maid had removed the bolster, and, substituting for it her own slight person, concealed herself to perfection with the pillows and coverlid.

"All the luxurious appointments of this richly-

furnished room—known as the Angel-chamber—but more particularly the bed, were objects of considerable admiration. The bed was of foreign manufacture, made unusually low, carved, gilt, and inlaid at the foot with malachite. The canopy was crowned by an angelic figure, exquisitely moulded, from whose arms, extended in an attitude of protection, and from whose half-opened golden wings, descended the rich hangings of azure silk which completed the drapery of a couch worthy of a queen.

“When that merry day was over, and the tired children had gone to rest, Mrs. Callender stole quietly up to May’s little chamber, and found Nurse Goodes standing by the bed. Nurse put her fingers to her lips, and looked mournfully at the little sleeper. Her mistress’s eyes followed hers. There was the same strange frown she had once already seen. Now, too, the lips were drawn back, the teeth set, the innocent face wholly changed, and wearing an expression of mingled horror and disgust inexpressibly shocking to contemplate. Mrs. Callender scarcely recognised the child.

“Presently she murmured some indistinct sounds. Mamma put down her ear.

“‘They are rushing at me—rushing, rushing again! Angel, O angel!’ gasped May.

“‘My child!—my May!—what is it? Wake!’ cried the terrified mother, clasping her.

“May woke, and the expression passed as though a mask had fallen. She sat up, smiling, perfectly composed, and, kissing her mother, asked what was the matter.

“‘I—I thought you were sleeping uneasily, my love,’ said mamma, half-fearing to see the look return. ‘Was it a dream?’

“‘Ah, I remember,’ said May, lightly. ‘Some creatures came flying at me all round, breaking, like black waves, against the bed; but the angel stops them always.’

“‘Missy slept two nights in the Angel-room, soon after we came,’ explained nurse, ‘and had the same dream there.’

“‘But I don’t mind it,’ said May. ‘It—it’s that other——’

“The strange look seemed about to steal over her face again, but she covered it with her hands.

“Mrs. Callender sat down beside the bed, and motioned nurse away; she was bent on finding out the mystery.

“‘What “other,” May? My little girl, you have some trouble or fear. Confide in mamma. What is it?’

“May was silent for a moment, holding her mother’s hand, and mechanically counting the white fingers. Then she said:

“‘Mamma, I *cannot* tell. Something is wrong with me—that I know; but, indeed, indeed I cannot describe it. It is a sensation so quick, so sudden, that, almost before I can feel how horrible it is, it is gone! It is neither taste, touch, nor smell, yet is something of all three. I should not mind it so much, however, but for a sort of shock or spasm of sickening horror that comes with it. It is as though—as though some wicked thing had touched me,’ added the little

girl, in a low voice, clasping more tightly the hand she held.

"Mrs. Callender's heart beat faster; but she was a firm and sensible woman, and addressed herself with such quiet energy to the task of soothing the poor child—more unnerved, apparently, by the confession of her fear, than she had been by its concealment—that she very soon attained her object; and having watched her darling into a tranquil sleep, withdrew to confer with nurse, whom she found in the adjoining apartment, weeping bitterly.

"'O ma'am, ma'am!—O my dear lady!' sobbed Nurse Goodes. 'Take her away—take the darling away!'

"'Away, nurse?'

"'Away from this dreadful house. It is not for a Christian creature to live in. Charlotte says so.'

"'Charlotte?'

"'Old Charlotte, the charwoman; she that was here, off and on, in Mr. Archbold's time. She knows that Mr. Archbold's sister was warned in the same way. Her brother laughed at it, and so did she, for she was a high-couraged lady, Mrs. Annesley—but she was touched six times, and took.'

"'Touched and taken! Are you mad, you silly thing?' exclaimed her lady. 'For mercy's sake, nurse, for my child's sake, beware how you give utterance to any such folly! As for old Charlotte, I shall talk to her myself to-morrow.'

"The next day, a medical gentleman, their neighbour—in consequence of a private missive from Mrs. Callender—made a purely accidental visit; and pretty

May, who happened to be alone with her mother, was subjected to some professional questionings. Mr. Mawry was forced to admit that she looked worn and thin, but was utterly unable to detect any symptom of disease; consequently, as nothing is avowedly the most approved remedy for nothing, he sent it to her in the form of some prettily coloured medicaments, that might have been swallowed with impunity by a delicate bee.

“But, in spite of the absence of medicine, in spite of care and vigilance, in spite of soft spring winds and strengthening food, Bud May began to droop and fade. So no more hoop, and hide-and-seek, and rustic rambles, for my little queen. From the strong sea-beach to the terrace-walks, from these to the sofa, from the sofa to her own little chamber, poor May fought the battle of her fragile life, till the most sanguine of the surrounding hearts durst hope no longer. Change of air and scene had been suggested; but the doctors—another had been called in—at once declared that nothing could be so well adapted to her seeming condition as the clear soft climate in which she already breathed. As for change of scene, the little patient herself so earnestly, almost passionately entreated that she might not be moved elsewhere, that the idea was instantly abandoned.

“One other request the little maid preferred, that she might be placed henceforth in the Angel-chamber, until—until—— It was done; and now, as though she had nothing more to ask or wish for, Bud May sank quickly and silently away.

“I have not told you what, all this time, I felt and

did. I knew that my little princess was dying—going to God—yet I dared not dwell much upon the loss to myself: selfish regrets were out of place, could have no part or lot in such a matter. Still, I was not forbidden to sorrow with and for the rest; and many a day have I sat waiting patiently for the hour that sometimes saw me admitted for a moment to the Angel-chamber, to kneel beside the golden bed, and kiss the little waxen hand that faintly welcomed me.

“May loved soft music; and we soon found that her greatest solace was to be left entirely alone, to gaze up at the shining countenance of the majestic angel, and to listen to the low sound of some sacred melody chanted by Violet from a distant room.

“One evening—it was the 10th of April—the fact of our invalid’s having been somewhat better in the morning had emboldened me to bring with me a beautiful kitten, of which she had once expressed her admiration. May was delighted, fondled it heartily, thanked me with the only kiss she had ever bestowed, and bade me leave the soft purring thing with her for awhile, and return for it before I left the house.

“I cannot tell what feeling possessed me, but, like May herself, I longed for solitude, and, instead of proceeding to the music-room, stole into an intervening apartment, and presently began to weep.

“A soft hand touched me; it was Mrs. Callender, whom I had not noticed sitting in the darkening room, and who, moved by my grief, came and sat beside me, whispering broken words of consolation.

“The house was hushed in the deepest silence,

broken only by a soft voice—Violet's—breathing rather than singing some verses of the trustful psalm :

Thou dost my wandering soul reclaim,
And, to Thy endless praise,
Instruct with humble zeal to walk
In Thy most righteous ways.
I pass the gloomy vale of death
From fear and danger free,
For there——

The voice of the weeping singer broke. In the pause, there was, or seemed to be, a faint call from the sick-chamber. Other ears had fancied it too, for Violet and the rest were already in the passage, and in another moment all had assembled in the Angel-chamber.

“There they lay, both asleep, the kitten and the little maid; but my little maid shall never wake again till the resurrection.”

Grandpapa was silent for a few moments, then resumed in his accustomed tone :—

“After a very brief interval, No. 23 found another occupant in the person of Colonel Robert Doulton, a stern warrior of the Wellington school, who had served in the Indian wars, and now, at the express suggestion of a London physician, brought down his invalid wife, to derive what benefit she might from the cheerful scenery and salubrious breezes of a notoriously healthy neighbourhood.

“Mrs. Doulton—if the pale phantom that had travelled in a couch-carriage, and been borne up to the chief bedroom in the arms of one strong maid, deserved the name of a living being—was the object

upon which her lord—a man of iron, resolved, unmal-leable, self-indulgent—lavished all his love and care. Nothing could exceed the solicitude with which he watched the fluctuations of her disorder, and assembled round her every imaginable object calculated to distract the pains, or tranquillise the mind of his beloved patient. The physician, Dr. T——, came down once a week, to resolve himself that his prescriptions were accurately followed, to dine sumptuously with the colonel, and to receive the fifty-pound note which so poorly recompensed his lost afternoon! while little Mr. Mawry, the apothecary, received orders to look in at least once in the course of every day.

“In spite of these arrangements, the generally received opinion that Mrs. Doulton would never quit that splendid chamber alive, grew and strengthened.

“Old Charlotte, the charwoman, who had no more business in that house than I—*less*, indeed, for had I not buried my heart there, while she had only secreted her pattens?—she, I say, contrived to re-connect herself with the establishment, and, upon those pattens, walked quietly back into its service.

“Charlotte asserted—and they believed her—that, no matter what the number of regular servants in a house, there was always room for a charwoman. The reports she brought, in her clinkings to and fro, were gloomy in the extreme. Mrs. Doulton seldom quitted her bed—never her apartment. As for the colonel, he spent the greater part of the morning at his wife’s bedside, reading to or conversing with her; then he rode or walked out for an hour, and returning, passed the hours till dinner in the Angel-room, which he

chose to make his study, engaged in the preparation of a work relating to his campaigns in India. The physician was their sole London visitor; and of the neighbours, the good rector, who received a cordial welcome, and Mr. Mawry, alone had access to the drawing-room of No. 23.

"Thus passed about two months, when, on a certain morn of August, the dark prognostications of old Charlotte and party were signally confounded by the appearance of Mrs. Doulton upon the gravelled terraces in a Bath chair. She was decidedly better. Close beside her stalked her tall dark husband, rubbing his hands, and eyeing his well-nursed partner with fond complacency, as he saw that face, which must have been a sweet and pleasant one in other days, brighten with gratitude and pleasure under the influence of the soft free air, and the sense of returning vigour.

"They took many turns together, and went home at last with manifest reluctance; the invalid, as if vain of her renovated strength, disdaining the ready hand that offered to reconduct her across the threshold.

"A day or two later, Mr. Mawry, who had already, as he confessed to his wife, experienced some slight twinges of conscience on the score of receiving a daily fee for his needless visits, was stopped by the colonel as he crossed the hall, and invited to remain and partake of the dinner at that moment about to be served.

"Mawry was fond of a good dinner. He sniffed, and accepted.

"The repast, though, to all appearance, a visitor had

not been expected, was of the most costly description, slightly Eastern in character, varied in feature, perfect in detail. Host and guest agreed in postponing mere intellectual pleasure to the great business of the hour; and it was only when, the banquet finished, they drew chairs to the window, and began sipping their claret, that the colonel put forth his powers of conversation. Even then Mr. Mawry fancied that he glanced from subject to subject rather too abruptly, and was revolving in his secret soul whether his host was endeavouring to astonish him with his stores of knowledge, or whether his mind was in truth pre-occupied with some deep matter, the remembrance of which he sought to drown in desultory talk, when the colonel suddenly rose, and, going to a bookcase, took down a large and a small volume, and handed the latter to his visitor. Mawry saw that it was in some Oriental character, in paragraphs, numbered and lettered. The colonel then changed volumes, and showing Mawry that he now held an English translation, requested him to name any paragraph throughout the work which he the colonel, holding the original, would render into literal English.

“Mawry did as he was desired, naming in succession four or five passages of considerable length, all of which his host read off in English with perfect ease and correctness. He then laid the books aside.

“‘Now, sir, feel my pulse,’ were his next words.

“Mawry obeyed. It was not a full beat, but regular, and moderately fast.

“‘Am I in health, think you? Chest and lungs all right?’

“ ‘Do you wish me to examine with the stethoscope? I have it with me.’

“The other assented, and Mr. Mawry, through the medium of that plain-speaker, ascertained that all was sound.

“ ‘And I am not mad?’

“The doctor stared.

“ ‘I have conversed collectedly upon many different topics, and have translated with literal accuracy several passages from the most involved and difficult of Eastern writers. Are these proofs sufficient?’

“Mawry bowed an affirmative.

“Now, doctor, I am going to ask you a curious question. Remember, I do not speak in figures. Simply and plainly—Can a man *taste death*?’

“Mawry could not forbear a start.

“ ‘I will explain further,’ said the colonel. ‘Once in three or four days—sometimes more frequently—I experience a sensation so difficult to describe, that I was driven to the adoption of the simile that caused your surprise. It is like—like a poisoned cloth flung suddenly over my whole face. Eyes, nose, mouth, are impregnated with its horrible presence. I shudder, from head to foot, with an indescribable mixture of loathing and rage. In a second it is gone—I am as well as ever. Have you, in your experience, met with such a case? I am not given to idle fancies. When I tell you, doctor, that I have been present in eleven battles, have passed nights among dead and dying creatures, witnessed every phase of the terrible side of war, you may believe that my nerves are not easily shaken. But I will own that the circumstance I have

alluded to, in its singular recurrence, gives me considerable uneasiness; and fearing that, should the horror seize me in my wife's presence, the change of countenance I cannot control might occasion her grave alarm, I resolved to take your opinion on the subject. Let me have it.'

"Mawry pondered deeply for a moment. He was struck with the coincidence of the symptoms described with those which had afflicted May Callender. Some whisper of the supernatural agency to which they were attributed had reached him in one or another of his frequent visits, but his mind was devoid of the slightest taint of superstition, and his thoughts now set strongly in quite another direction.

"'Can you recall,' he presently added, 'the first occasion on which this sensation occurred?'

"'Let me see. No. Stay—yes. I had been chatting with my wife, had partaken of her afternoon tea, and was returning to my study.'

"'It happens most frequently after meals?'

"'No I think *not*,' said Doulton, reflecting.

"'You take refreshment sometimes during the day; you Indian gentlemen must have your tiffin, and perhaps, in the intervals, a glass of pale ale or soda-water.'

"'Possibly,' said the colonel, whose attention was languishing. 'I believe I do.'

"'Brought to you by the butler, eh? What claret this is! Tredway, then, is always your cupbearer—eh, colonel?'

"'I suppose so—I forget. Really, I can hardly tell you. Sometimes Tredway, sometimes Mahmoud, sometimes, eh—ah!' The colonel yawned.

“ ‘ Sometimes ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Old Charlotte, I think they call her. An old woman who favours me with her presence here, for the sake, apparently, of helping eight idle servants to do nothing. But why these domestic queries ? and especially what has *that* old baggage to do with the matter ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Hm ! ’ said Mawry, rather gravely, ‘ I don’t know. When did this happen the *second* time ? ’ ”

“ ‘ I had been writing for a couple of hours, when, feeling weary, and missing, perhaps, my siesta, I threw myself on the bed—there is one in the room—and fell asleep. In about an hour, as I afterwards found, I started up in a state—I frankly avow it—of horrible alarm, as though I had been set upon by a band of fiends ! Then came that choking horror—*then*, thank God ! release, for I do not think a human mind, however strong, could sustain so much as a minute of that anguish, and keep its balance. ’ ”

“ ‘ It is curious, ’ said Mawry. ‘ I confess, colonel, I do not comprehend your case. So far as my skill instructs me, you are sound in body, and unquestionably sane in mind. Still there are fancies. Firm and self-possessed as you seem, it is yet quite possible that the solution may be found in some disarrangement of the nervous system. You have perhaps overtaken your brain—a little less work, and more exercise. ’ ”

“ ‘ I see, sir, I see ! ’ exclaimed the colonel, rising, with some heat ; ‘ you take me for an illusionist, a—
Ha ! by Heaven ! *it is coming now !* ’ ”

“ Mawry looked steadily at him. The colonel was not acting. The dark-lined countenance grew deadly

pale, the eyes glowed, the teeth chattered and gnashed. In spite of himself, the doctor was awe-stricken at an appearance that powerfully recalled the fearful traditions of *possession*.

"The attack, whatever its nature, was but momentary. With a long, deep inspiration, like one over whom a stifling wave has passed, the colonel seemed to recover himself completely, and, with a light laugh, held out his hand.

"Mawry took the hint, and his leave.

" 'I will send you a pleasant draught,' he said; 'or rather, I will instruct your butler to make it. And you will oblige me, colonel, by receiving nothing of a liquid kind *from any hand but his*. This is important: I will give you my reasons hereafter. Take your wine as usual. Good-night!'

"Colonel Doulton neglected *one* portion of his friend's advice—he took even less than his accustomed exercise, and was so rarely seen abroad, that old Charlotte underwent some severe cross-examinations. Her report now was that the mistress grew stronger and stronger, but refused to take the air; that the colonel was becoming seriously ill—could scarcely bear the fatigue of walking up-stairs—and confined himself almost wholly to his study, dividing the day between his writing-table and the bed. The doctor, somewhat affronted at his patient's systematic disregard of his counsels, had discontinued his visits, and had not hitherto been invited to renew them.

"Thus affairs remained for several weeks, till one morning the reverend rector was sent for to the house. His visit was a prolonged one. He came out grave,

and pale, and charged with a melancholy tale of which he made no secret. The colonel had been stricken with some mysterious visitation beyond the reach of human skill, and, with a rooted presentiment of his approaching end, was pressing the work on which he had been so long engaged to a conclusion. He seemed to be awaiting, although with the courage of a Christian and a soldier, an inevitable fate.

“Nor was he deceived. One bleak, gray morning in December, the windows of No. 23 remained closed. Colonel Doulton was dead !”

PART II.

“It was at this period that attention began to be more generally attracted to the house, and the peculiar evil fortune which seemed to attach to whomsoever became its occupants—the last four families having each lost a member within its walls. A certain suspicion, originating none could say exactly where, hung about the wretched old woman who had clung like an evil destiny to that house of grief. She could obtain no employment; few would bestow upon her the smallest alms; the parish found means to resist her claim; the boys in the street re-christened her, without ceremony, as ‘Moll Murder;’ invited her to supply them with a pen’orth of arsenic on credit; and, in return, pledged themselves faithfully to attend her approaching execution. But apparently these suspicions were insufficient, and the law suffered her to starve on unmolested.

"In good truth, the weight of public opinion inclined to the supernatural side ; and such extraordinary tales began to gain credence, that the agent deemed it his duty to apprise the landlord, Mr. Archbold, of the character attaching to his house, and the improbability of its getting another tenant, unless something could be speedily done to redeem its reputation.

"Not a week elapsed before Mr. Archbold, without commenting on his agent's report, laconically announced that an eligible tenant was on the point of repairing to the spot, and would take immediate possession.

"An excellent idea had occurred to the shrewd old merchant. His favourite nephew, Charles Annesley, had been guilty of an act of which he thought fit highly to disapprove ; had, in fact, taken to wife the beautiful daughter of a village schoolmaster ! Mr. Archbold, who was a man of the fewest words, limited the expression of his indignation to a curt note, in which he informed the delinquent that, to avoid any future misapprehensions, he felt it right to state frankly, that he, Charles, would never receive one farthing of the fortune he had destined for him.

"Charles was a young man of high spirit. He looked at his wife, and thought that the united uncles of Great Britain could never have amassed a treasure equal in value to that he had discovered and appropriated to himself in the secluded hamlet of Little Gidding, Hants. Upon the whole, he thought he loved his Mary, if possible, a trifle better for the price he was likely to pay for her. The change in Charles's prospects, if it cooled a few friends, warmed others into

of unearthly preparations! No, no! Burlesque is very amusing in its way; but the caricature of a cabinet-pudding—the distorted phantom of a frican-deau—is no fun at all! No—we must manage another servant somehow.’

“The agent, when consulted on the matter, looked grave, hemmed, didn’t know—whether—in short, he might as well inform Mr. Annesley at once, that there existed an unaccountable prejudice against the house, and that it was quite likely Charles might experience difficulties of a kind he did not expect, in augmenting his establishment. These auguries were perfectly correct. Not a soul could be found in the vicinity willing to take service at No. 23; and the young couple, reluctant to incur the expense of sending to London for a domestic, sat down to their first meal a little depressed in spirits—Charles, who had concealed from his wife the cause of the difficulty, secretly resolving to extract some further information from the cautious agent on the morrow.

“They were sitting after dinner, with recovered spirits, but in deep consultation, when there came a low knock at the door.

“Bidden to enter, a dirty old woman made her appearance. It was no other than old Charlotte, who had come to offer her valuable services in default of better.

“‘She loved the house,’ she said, ‘and all that was in it. Old as she looked, she could do as much as twenty—was a very good cook, and would work her fingers to the bone for her dear little ladyship. As for wages, she didn’t want none of *them*.’

"As these terms seemed reasonably cheap, and they were really in a difficulty, Charles, after a moment's dubious contemplation of the old woman's squalid figure, gave utterance to the assent he saw in his wife's clear eyes, and engaged the strange attendant, enjoining her in the first place to have recourse to soap and water; in the second, to eat a good supper.

"Though the old woman's eyes glistened, like those of a famished wolf, at the mention of food, she paused at the door, and, hobbling back, said in a sort of hoarse whisper: 'Please, sir, and my lady, don't say that you've taken old Charlotte into your service. I shall never go abroad; and nobody will know, if you don't tell 'em.'

"Charles smiled at the idea of the old crone fearing that the dangerous reputation of the house might damage hers; but, unwilling to explain before his wife, hastily gave the required promise, and, summoning Hephzibah, dismissed the new cook, under that young lady's charge, to the sphere of her future duties.

"Affairs for a few days went smoothly enough. Charles commenced a course of study preparatory to the regular carrying out of his professional project, while the little bride busied herself perpetually in the direction of their economical household, and was never tired of watching over the well-being of uncle's beautiful things. Old Charlotte, who seemed to possess the faculty of brightening up considerably at will, had shed her squalid slough, and come out a rather venerable, but still effective moth. She really proved to be a very good cook, preparing all their meals

without assistance, and often, of her own impulse, providing little supplementary refreshments for the mistress she professed to adore.

"One morning, Annesley having gone out alone, Mary—attended by old Charlotte, who was well acquainted with every drawer, shelf, and cupboard in the place—made a regular progress of inspection throughout the house, ending, as it happened, at the Angel-chamber.

"‘What a lovely room!’ exclaimed Mary, for the twentieth time, as she entered; ‘and what a couch! When I die, I should like it to be on just such a bed as this’—and she sat down upon it—‘with that sweet majestic face shining upon me.’

"‘Everybody *does* die here,’ said old Charlotte, cheerfully. ‘Master’s mother—Miss May Callender—Colonel Doulton, all breathed their lasts on this very bed.’

"‘Can you remember all those deaths?’ asked Mary.

"‘Remember them? Bless you, my dear, they’ve all been touched and took within those five years!’

"‘Touched and took! What do you mean, Charlotte?’ said the young mistress, opening her blue eyes.

"‘Well, well, we’ll see!’ muttered the old woman. ‘And so you’d like to die here too, would you, my lamb?’ she went on, with a peculiar look, gazing at the pretty, fragile creature before her from head to foot, as though mentally dressing her for the grave.

"Now, whether or not there was something unusually repulsive this day about the old woman, or whether she simply desired to be alone, Mary yielded to an irresistible inclination to dismiss her follower,

and, having done so, sat down at the great plate-glass window, which faced the west.

"The view from hence was both fair and sad. First came a slip of much neglected garden, a crowded battle-ground of weeds and flowers—the weeds having decidedly the best of it—some leafless elms and fig-trees, and a high wall, magnified to an immense size with sheaves and coils of everlasting ivy. Past this was a Roman Catholic cemetery, long since filled, and abandoned as a place of interment. Over and between three or four noble cypresses, that shaded the forgotten dead, might be seen the broad weald, green with sprouting corn; then a range of blue hills, on the last of which lingered the westering sun.

"Half an hour later, Charles was returning home. When within a few paces of his own door, a loud ringing shriek struck him like a stab! In a moment he was in the house, and dashed into the room from the direction of which he had fancied the cry proceeded.

"His wife was on the bed, frightfully convulsed—Hephzibah and Charlotte beside her. She recovered instantly on seeing him, and a violent flood of tears completely restored her tranquillity; after which, being left alone with her husband, Mary related as follows:

"She had sat for some time at the window, watching the purpling clouds, and the sombre tints of evening, calmly enveloping the quiet scene, when, becoming sensible of a degree of lassitude, and a strange inert feeling not usual with her, she moved to the low golden couch, and lying fairly down, fell into an uneasy sleep.

"She lay upon her right side, with her face to the wall—on that side, distant scarcely half a yard from the bed—and dreamed that, so lying, the wall before her opened slowly, and that there issued from it a skeleton, bearing in its hand its own severed skull. As it approached, one fleshless hand detached itself from the skull, and pointed to the vacant eye-holes, while the head muttered: "See how they treat us yonder. Here were blue diamonds once, my sister, that laughed and swam like yours. Come, let us compare!"

"The skull was thrust up into her very face. She was conscious of the earthy, fetid odour—her own face was drawn as it were more and more into the sister-skull as though it were becoming part of it—when, with a shriek and a desperate struggle, she flung the spectre and the dream away.

"Although, for the moment, the painful impression appeared to pass away, it was but too evident to Annesley that the health and spirits of his little wife had received a serious shock. In a few days her rich colour was gone, her lips looked dry and feverish—she began to complain of headache, and started when suddenly touched, or at the least unexpected sound.

"One day, after making vain efforts to eat her breakfast, the poor little thing leaned her head on her hands, and burst into tears. 'Oh! Charles, my poor boy,' she sobbed, 'I fear I'm very, very ill.'

"The wistful, anxious look in those blue eyes alarmed her husband far more than even her words. He laid her tenderly on the sofa, soothing her to the utmost of his power, and, not without bitter self-re-

proach for neglecting it so long, despatched Hephzibah to request Mr. Mawry's immediate attendance.

"The little doctor acknowledged that his new patient looked delicate in the extreme, and required every attention. The present attack was clearly nervous; and he endeavoured to elicit from her whether she had sustained any recent shock or alarm. Mary, however, was ashamed to confess her dream; and Mr. Mawry could discover nothing but that she was subject to a sudden and fearful spasm, which affected her whole head from the eyes to the throat. In the latter organ, especially, she suffered much pain.

"On the point of leaving, Mawry turned round, and carelessly observed: 'I take it for granted, my dear madam, that you have an excellent watcher in your husband; but you need some care. Who, may I ask, is your principal attendant?'—Mary smiled.—'Who, for example, makes your tea?'

"'The housemaid, Hephzibah, generally; but sometimes old Ch'—— Mary checked herself.

"'I beg your pardon—who?'

"'I was about to name an old woman we have taken into the house to help the housemaid, but, for some reason I have not inquired, she does not wish it to be known.'

"'Old Charlotte!' ejaculated Mawry.

"'Such is her name,' replied Mary, astonished at *his* astonishment.

"Mawry, who had sat down again, got up with a face white as ashes.

"'I—I have a word to say to Mr. Annesley,' he said, and took a hasty leave.

"Charles was reading medicine in the Angel-room.

"'Good Heavens, sir!' exclaimed the little doctor, bursting in, 'do you know what you have got in your house?'

"Horrid visions of his Mary in typhus fever—in small-pox—a lunatic—flashed like lightning across Charles's mind.

"'What—*what*? ' he gasped out.

"'Moll Murder!'

"'Moll *what*?'

"'The old hag to whom the boys in the town have given that title, for her strange association with every death that has occurred in this unhappy house since it became your uncle's. The very worst suspicions cleave to her. For mercy's sake, Mr. Annesley, get rid of this old wretch before you are an hour older!'

"Charles stood aghast. 'Is it—possible that——'

"'I know not *what* is possible; but do it, sir—do it,' said the eager apothecary; and Charles, infected with his earnestness, promised compliance.

"That night Charlotte was dismissed, this time taking her pattens with her, as though her work were done.

"'Touched and took!' was Charlotte's benediction, looking back and shaking her finger as she passed the door.

"Let me pass quickly over these sad details. The young wife was indeed doomed. Drooping gradually, like the preceding victims, she slowly but certainly followed them to the same bourne.

"Annesley would have left the house, but nothing

could induce Mary to consent. His uncle would be vexed; would think them careless, ungrateful—besides, they had no other home. Most of all she earnestly desired, if die she must, to breathe her last in the Angel-chamber, with those glorious eyes and protecting arms above her.

“She had her wish; and, in a few short weeks, the fourth victim to the mystery of that house slept in the village churchyard.

“The popular feeling against old Charlotte had by this time attained such open expression, that it became absolutely necessary to investigate its grounds. She was accordingly given into custody. Some examinations took place; but the doctor being compelled to certify to a case of natural death, and no direct inculpatory evidence being adduced, the prisoner, on the very day of poor Mary’s funeral, was restored to liberty, and immediately disappeared.

“It was now imagined that the house would be finally closed. The next-door neighbour on one side had already quitted; he on the other had given notice. Mr. Archbold himself felt his mind infected by the prevailing superstition; and, moreover, seeing the cause of misunderstanding removed, was ready enough to give indulgence to his returning kindness towards his nephew, to whom he accordingly wrote, desiring him to quit without delay the scene of his bereavement, and resume the place he had formerly held in his uncle’s home and affection.

“Charles refused.

“He considered that his uncle, in placing them in a house under this notorious ban, had been actuated by

less disinterested motives than he had imagined, and had been even in some degree instrumental in the fatal misfortune that had befallen him. Besides, he had a duty to perform, to which it was his fixed determination to devote every energy he possessed—nay, if needful, life itself. He would find out the mystery of the haunted house. And no knight, in quest of the holy Greal, ever started on the doubtful way with more resolved purpose than Charles, when, returning from his Mary's funeral, he re-entered the desolate mansion.

"He was alone, absolutely alone; for poor Hephzibah, though attached to her master, and pitying him with all her honest heart, had evinced such unmistakable symptoms of aversion to sleeping another night in the house, that Charles, unshaken in purpose, judged it best to dismiss her at once to her friends. So the door closed behind the sobbing Hephzibah, and Charles was alone—absolutely alone.

"For hours he sat musing by the melancholy fire, undisturbed by a single sound. Evening at length approached, and still he sat, as though Memory had chained him hand and foot to the place where he had passed so many happy hours. Gradually, he got into a train of recollection that conducted him through the entire history of his lost love, from the first chance meeting when he had stopped, a lost, benighted hunter, to inquire the road, and Mary's azure eyes glittered in the starlight, as if they belonged to it, while she stepped forward to his horse's side, and raised them in directing him. He had arrived at the evening when they had come, with their modest baggage and rustic henchwoman, to the magnificent

house, had examined its alarming glories, had dined merrily, and were reclining in their deep velvet chairs, their laughing faces reflected grotesquely in the polished stove, up to the moment when old Charlotte, like an evil genius, appeared at the door.

"At that moment a sound struck Charles's ear—it was like a distant footstep somewhere within the house. The door of the room in which he sat was wide open, and presently he was aware of a slow, soft step ascending the stair.

"To say that Charles's heart did not accelerate its usual pace by a pulse or two, would be to deny a feeling that might have so far assailed the most collected. An idea that the bold resolution he had formed was about to be met half-way, that the mysterious Horror of the House was actually approaching him in an incarnate shape, struck the listener with an appalling sense of being suddenly called upon to deal with what one cannot comprehend. Charles involuntarily gripped the velvet arms of his chair, and half rising, slowly turned his face to the door, where the step had halted.

"There stood old Charlotte !

"His fear melted into rage.

"'Wretched old hag!—accursed murderess!' he exclaimed, forgetting for the moment his own doubts of her guilt—'dare you——'

"'Charles Annesley,' said the old woman, walking up to him, 'it is you who should not *dare*. I warned you—I warned your mother—I warned Mrs. Callender—I warned every one of you, young and old, of the danger hidden in this fearful house. Yet I loved and

served them all when they would let me, and to do so ran the same risk with them. For reward, you have put the murderer's mark on me. I am the devil's mate, Moll Murder, the old poisoning witch. My life is nothing; they might as well have hanged me. I hoped they would, for the Lord keeps justice for the innocent, and He knows that I never willingly harmed a living creature. They were all touched and took, poor dears! but not by *me*. I know you are come back to find out who killed your darling, and old Charlotte's come to help you.'

" 'You!'

" 'Like enough in some things,' said the old woman, steadily. 'You've no more pleasure in life—no more have I. You've one object—mine's the same, only my reason's the best. Find out what you may, you can't bring back the dead. But I wear Cain's black brand, and that's an ugly mask to die in; *I* won't, if I can help it.'

" Charles stood looking at her with an amazement he did not care to hide; something in the woman's altered manner impressed him favourably, despite himself. His thoughts held a rapid council: if the hag were guilty, and were really a prey to that fearful form of mania which could alone account for such cruel crimes, he had no fear for himself, and might even, by examination and analysis, obtain some clue to her alleged practices. If she were innocent, she might afford him important aid in his investigations. Some attendant he absolutely required. In fine, he acceded to her proposal, and directed her to take up her residence in the house as before.

"A feeling he could not well define determined Charles to sleep that night in the Angel-chamber. It was there that his Mary had experienced the first mysterious visitation—there, on his bosom, breathed her last gentle sigh.

"As he lay down, though with little hope of rest, he could not resist uttering a fervent prayer that the terrible influence might reveal itself to him, also—no matter with what peril accompanied—so that he might but analyse its fearful features, and gauge its destroying power.

"His desire was fulfilled. It must have been about two o'clock when Charles woke, with a start, under the impression that a hand had been laid upon his face. But *such* a hand! It could have belonged to no living human thing. Horrible as it seems, it was like that of a putrid corpse. His mouth, his nose, his eyes, his throat, were choaked and smarting with some fearful effluvia, his pulse went irregularly—his very soul sickened within him!

"Annesley was a man of cool, intrepid nature, and the strongest nerves. Despite his confusion, he rose and wrestled with the Terror, as if it were a living foe that had nearly mastered him. A moment, and the victory was won. Slowly and reluctantly, as though baffled in its assault, the horrible fear, whose presence he had almost *felt*, relaxed its hold, and quitted him. Charles instinctively staggered forward, as in pursuit, reached the window, and, throwing it up, gazed forth into the calm, cold night.

"'Whence, whence, O Horror?' he gasped.

"The next moment, with a countenance deadly

white, he reclosed the window, and returned to his bed.

"In that instant, the Horror, the Ghost, had revealed itself to him, as he had desired.

"But Charles would have further proof, and witness too.

"The following morning, after pretending to eat some portion of the breakfast he found comfortably prepared for him in the library, Charles summoned old Charlotte to a conference.

"She came, so changed, that her master could scarcely recognize, in the hale, respectable-looking matron before him, the wretched old outcast of the previous day. But I have said that Charlotte had, in common with other humble creatures I have met with, a way of brightening and expanding under certain influences, which revealed qualities hitherto wrapt in shade. The troubles she had undergone, above all, the foul stigma under which she laboured, had had a purifying and vivifying effect, so apparent in her manner and language, that Charles secretly congratulated himself on his ally.

"He began by tracing as minutely as possible the history of the later illnesses and deaths, beginning with that of his mother, which event occurred during his absence abroad. In this he received most material assistance from Mr. Mawry, for whom he sent during the morning, and who, after overcoming his astonishment at finding old Charlotte a member of the council, entered with all zeal into the inquiry.

"The result proved that the same extraordinary symptoms had been evolved in every case—namely,

severe nervous, semi-cataleptic attacks, prostration of strength, mental depression, decay of the vital powers, and death—Mawry declaring himself utterly unable to account either for the origin of the disease, or for the rapidity and certainty with which, once conceived, it hurried the victims to their end.

“On receiving the information he had gathered, Annesley was struck with one singular feature in the case—the predilection evinced by every patient in turn for the Angel-chamber. It seemed a fatal fancy; for, certainly, whatever soothing influence it might exercise on the minds of the invalids, was not reflected in their bodies. On the contrary, every one became rapidly worse, and the mysterious Terror—though its recurrence grew more and more frequent—seemed gradually to lose its intensity, in proportion as physical health declined, till it left the last days of the sufferer wholly undisturbed.

“‘*Now,*’ said Charles, as with a deep sigh he raised his pale face from his hands, after a minute’s meditation, ‘come with me, and I will show you the Horror in the House.’

“He walked, followed by the others, straight to the Angel-room. There it shone, with its regal couch, its superb mirrors, its glowing cabinets, its purple curtains. Charles threw up the window, admitting the soft fresh breeze.

“‘Does this,’ he asked, ‘look like a pestilence palace—a house of pain and death?’

“He struck upon one of the gilded panels as he spoke; it returned a hollow sound, like an echo of the last word, ‘*death!*’

"The next moment, Charles caught up a poker from the fireplace, and dashed in the panel.

" 'Stoop down,' he said to Mawry.

"The latter did so, but started back in horror, as a sickening, loathsome odour pervaded the apartment, as from a newly opened grave.

"There lay indeed the secret of the Horror. Out of that panel crept the unseen destroyer that had sucked away the breath, the life, of no less than five victims.

"From the Angel-chamber, which had been originally intended as a luxurious bath-room, a pipe had been prepared, the other extremity of which had vent in the sloping bank of the adjacent cemetery, long since become one mass of corrupting human clay. Thus, this fatal conduit, itself decayed, winding among broken vaults and mouldering mausoleums, gathered up the noxious exhalations, and poured them into the golden room. By what atmospheric changes, or movements in the earth, the amount of miasma thus transmitted was governed and modified, cannot, of course, be known; but that the poison varied greatly in quantity and strength was sufficiently proved by the fact that attention was never attracted to the vitiated atmosphere of the spacious and seemingly well-ventilated room.

"The panel which concealed the mouth of the pipe was low down—exactly on a level with the head of one sleeping in the Angel-bed, and probably distant from it but three or four feet. An almost imperceptible crevice in the thin panel must have projected that baneful breath into the sleeper's face as certainly, and, as it proved, as fatally, as the "juice

of cursed hebenon" dropped from the phial of the Danish regicide. No marvel that the end was rapid! To turn the face to *that* wall, was indeed to bid adieu to life, its hopes, its troubles, and its cares.

"Those more remarkable symptoms I have had to relate can only be referrible to nervous temperament, or to the mysterious trouble acting almost in the nature of disease, until disease was positively engendered.

"When, on the previous night, Charles threw up the window, some slight odour eliminated from the burial-ground, connecting itself with the loathsome sense from which he had just escaped, at once revealed to him the latter's origin.

"I gave you to understand, children, that this story was true; I now repeat that it is based on actual and melancholy fact.

"Many a child's banquet have I shared in that fatal chamber with my pretty May."



ON THE ROCK WITH GARIBALDI.

FILLIBUSTERING—I speak of the better sort, whose object is fame or freedom—is very pleasant and exciting while it lasts, but is subject, like other grand delights, to very painful seasons of reaction. Your fillibuster who has done his wild work, no matter at what loss of ease, and time, and blood, and handed over to legitimate authority the prize for which he has been contending, is a lost, forgotten thing. A cracked bottle, a blunted razor, an empty sack, an exploded firework, are emblems of substantiality, brilliancy, and power, compared with him. It is not that the disbanded creature is not brave, honest, a good comrade, not content, nay, joyful, to have served Liberty for twopence a day, irregularly disbursed, or even to have waived altogether this last claim; it is simply that the man has “no position,” or, if he have, it is that of an amateur thief-catcher, whose services, hailed with enthusiasm in the moment of need, become embarrassing so soon as the work is over. The regular

police-force repudiate him with something like scorn ; the public, individually, disown his disreputable acquaintance. He is a wild, rough creature, of violent habits and belligerent tastes. Thank him, somebody—and pitch him over !

Seeing how unpopular a garment the red shirt has suddenly become, a feeble-minded fillibuster might easily be betrayed into asking himself whether there were not, in reality, something shameful and unworthy in making people free, and end by feeling rather grateful, upon the whole, that the liberated parties—more generous than the convicts in *Don Quixote*—permitted their chain-breakers to escape without an actual pelting.

It was in some such mood as this that, wandering one February morning through the crowded ways of Genoa, it came into my mind to visit the island-home of my dear old general ; and the purpose, once formed, becoming irresistible, I at once accomplished it.

There is a fortnightly communication between Genoa and La Maddalena (one of the little communes of islands which includes Caprera) by means of the *Dante*, a small steamer of about two hundred tons, whose accommodations, though arranged principally with reference to the exportation of pigs, were good enough for a disbanded fillibuster. I was a little startled at the terms proposed for so short a voyage—forty-eight francs—but, sending a messenger later in the day, and finding that the price had sunk to thirty-seven, I came to the conclusion that the difference, eleven francs, was a fine in the nature of the ancient Jews' tribute, here levied upon red shirts,

and, in high spirits at having evaded it, prepared eagerly for my trip.

I was fortunate in my companions. The cabin of the little *Dante* was occupied by a party consisting of Menotti Garibaldi, the hero's eldest son (the gallant youth, now about two-and-twenty, was severely wounded in the wrist and hand at Calatafimi); Basso, the general's secretary; Genesi, of the commissariat; a captain of Türr's Guides; and another gentleman of distinction named "Fuoco" ("fire," in the battle sense), whose four legs had been seen, in many a skirmish, trotting busily about in the very hottest of the element from which he derived his name. There were, besides, a few ex-volunteers for Maddalena, and likewise a lady of Italian eye, but German tongue, whose reasons for visiting Caprera were an object of some speculation. Her manners, certainly, had not that repose which distinguished the noble house of Vere de Vere, it being even necessary to call in authority to quell a wordy contest in which the fair pilgrim had rashly engaged with an intoxicated mariner.

Scarcely had we been three hours at sea, when certain little stops—let us call them commas—began to indicate some lurking disarrangement in our engine-room; presently occurred what might be termed a semicolon, of at least three-quarters of an hour; and, finally, a period or full stop, after which we put about, and returned to Genoa.

Repairs completed, in a few hours we sailed again. The next day was fair and bright, and we ran down the coast of Corsica with a fine breeze, *so* fine, that the discreet skipper popped into Porto Vecchio for

the night, being now but thirty miles from our destination.

"Inglese ! Inglese !" said the voice of Menotti Garibaldi next morning (I felt an admonitory tug at my leg), "Caprera !"

I was on deck in an instant. We were running into the harbour of the adjacent island, La Maddalena, all whose maritime population seemed to be on the watch for us.

Maddalena, whose four thousand inhabitants furnish many a stout sailor to that treacherous sea, boasts of a race entirely distinct from the Sards proper, their neighbours, and having, as it appeared to me, few characteristics in common with them. The aspect of the island, varied as it is by a line of broken picturesque heights, is not unattractive. An old fortress overlooks the harbour. In the latter we found lying Alexandre Dumas's schooner yacht, the *Emma*, and a small steamer, the *Ichneusa*, placed at Garibaldi's orders, as a despatch-boat. There were, besides, some ten or twelve stout fishing-vessels, of twenty or twenty-five tons each.

There being no port at Caprera large and deep enough to admit such a colossal craft as the *Dante*, we, who were destined for that island, disembarked here ; and our cabin-party, entering a little yawl belonging to Menotti, manned by a native fisherman and a sailor from the *Emma*, swept up the narrow strait that separates San Stefano from La Maddalena, passing, as we did so, the residence of Captain Roberts. This gentleman, a veteran of Trafalgar, has been long resident on the island—so long, indeed, as to be able

to relate some interesting personal anecdotes of Byron and Shelley.

The breeze being fair, in about three-quarters of an hour we were nearing the little cove at Caprera which does duty for a port, and from which an ascent of a few hundred yards leads to the humble dwelling of the Great Soldier of Italy. Two or three figures, attended by a number of dogs, began, as we approached, to descend the mountain-path, as if to meet us; a cart of remarkable construction following, to bring up Menotti's luggage.

"Ah, see! There is my—my——" began Menotti eagerly; but his English gave way.

"Fader!" suggested Basso.

"No—papa—papa!" exclaimed Menotti, laughing.

The party on shore were laughing too, and that very heartily; and, moreover, it shortly became impossible to doubt that they were laughing at *us*. The general, for he it unquestionably was, appeared to be as much amused as anybody. What could it be? We looked at each other inquiringly, when the truth suddenly broke upon Basso.

"Capella longa! capella longa!" (tall hat), he exclaimed, pointing to Minotti's, which was of the English mode, the first time such a covering had adorned a head in Caprera.

The boat touched the shore, and Garibaldi, accompanied by Stagnetti, his aide-de-camp, Colonel Specchi, a friend who resides with him, and Colonel Dideri, came forward and gave us a cordial greeting. He was in his usual working-dress, and, suffering from ear-ache, had a handkerchief round his head. He wore

a shooting-jacket, and a pair of gray trousers, which, in spite of a blue patch in the knee, I recognised as having seen before. Let me not be thought disrespectful in describing thus minutely the imperfections of my dear chief's attire. May this hand never grasp either pen or rifle more, if those old gray trousers, with the patched knee, did not inspire me with more true reverence than could the combined lustre of every kingly robe, from Solomon's downward! What signifies how the royal soul be clad? It is Garibaldi!

It was now ten o'clock, and as the household dined at the primitive hour of noon, a cup of coffee was all the refreshment needed, after which the general introduced me to his fair young daughter, the Signora Teresina, a damsel of seventeen, who inherits her father's fascinating smile. Work, however, being the order of the hour, but little time was given to conversation, when the general retired to his study, the signora to her music, and others, myself included, to the operation of constructing a stone-fence round the garden, a spot in which the chief, hoe in hand (there are no spades in the island), passes much of his time, but having little book-horticulture, with a noble disregard of seasons.

The island, as by this time most people are aware, is divided among three proprietors, the larger portion belonging to an English lady, Mrs. Collins. This lady's residence is about two miles distant from that of her illustrious neighbour, with whom she is on terms of cordial intercourse. Only once had this amity been endangered, during her husband's life, and

at a period when the pressure of political circumstances rendered the general's residence in the island little short of compulsory. It happened that Garibaldi had a flock of sheep, whose pleasure it was to make periodical forays into the Collins territory, and that sometimes in such alarming force, that Mr. Collins, at the suggestion of his intendant, forwarded to the general a very spirited protest in reference to this violation of frontier laws. In spite of some terrible examples made by the chief among his insubordinate muttons, the inroads continued until they aroused—it would appear—the sensibilities of a band of patriotic pigs, who in their turn executed a raid of much severity upon Garibaldi's then unprotected garden and shrubbery. The general remonstrated. The pigs repeated their foray. The general shot the pigs—shot, and also ate them ! The enraged owner ordered his boat, and skimmed over the glassy strait, to consult his compatriot, Captain Roberts.

“What am I to do with such a man as this ?” asked poor Mr. Collins. “My pigs certainly were in the wrong, and if he had only *shot* them. . . . But to *eat* one's pigs !”

Captain Roberts suggested that the general might really have imagined that the *razzia* was directed by some mountain pig, who was at all times fair game ; and gave, altogether, such soothing counsel, that the little dispute ended in a renewal of that friendship which was not again disturbed.

At noon we re-assembled for dinner, the general, his son and daughter, Colonel and Madame Dideri, Basso, Stagnetti, Specchi, and “Agostino” (that is,

Austin, myself). We had excellent soup and fish, no meat, but plenty of most delicately flavoured Neapolitan sweetmeats. None of the party drank anything but water, though there was at hand a cask of British beer, a present to the chief, who pressed me, but in vain, to partake of it. Garibaldi talked little at table, a habit that seems to be respected by those around him; but when he did speak, the hero laughed and jested as merrily as when, at Milazzo, I saw him steal half the morsel of cheese from Stagnetti's plate, as the latter's attention was for a moment diverted.

Dinner over, we went into the sitting-room, when the signora played some charming pieces, and then laughingly invited me to take her place. Who likes to refuse? An Irishman and a fillibuster, I didn't. Only as I sat down did I recollect that I knew but three tunes in the world, and while debating whether the *Power of Love*, or the *Prima Donna Waltz*, or the *Girl I left behind me*, offered fewest difficulties, my embarrassment was not decreased by some one demanding a genuine Irish melody. A sort of reproachful chorus arose: "Signor Agostino an Irishman! Un soldato del Papa!"

The general came to my rescue. "No, no! *All* Irishmen are not soldiers of the pope! A brave Irish general" [he withheld the name] "offered me a battalion of Irish, if I needed them."

Shortly after, Garibaldi again withdrew to his study, and I saw him but once more that day—when he walked round the garden, and congratulated his wall-makers on their progress. At dusk, I took boat, and returned to Maddalena to sleep—the general's house

affording no accommodation for chance-comers. The general and Dideri occupy one sleeping-apartment; the rest of the staff, five in number, another; and the ladies, the third. Two faithful domestic servants, long resident with Garibaldi, complete the establishment of the man who, with but a thousand soldiers and his own great name, added Sicily and all the sister-kingdom, save a few square miles, to the sceptre of Italy. As for money, so scarce is it in the chief's household, that when, one day, a wounded soldier happened to come, and Garibaldi wished to bestow an alms, an appeal had to be made to Madame Dideri, the capitalist of the circle, who with some little difficulty produced the fifteen francs required.

Round Garibaldi's soldier-couch hang the portraits of many an old companion in arms—fallen in the long fight of freedom: among others, the patriot-martyrs, Ugo Bassi and Cicero Acchio; the brave Tukery, slain at Palermo; and the young and chivalrous Baron Cozzo, mortally hurt before Capua, on the 19th of September, while bringing in a wounded Sicilian volunteer. I had been well acquainted with Cozzo, having sat almost daily by his bedside during the three weeks of suffering he was called on to endure, and can still recall his gentle, "Ch' e cosa, Agostino?" (What's the matter, Austin?) when I sometimes failed to disguise the pain with which his hopeless condition inspired me. A rifle-bullet struck him in the thigh, frightfully shattering the bone. The limb was swollen almost to the size of the body, and twisted round. In spite, however, of the anguish he must have suffered, and aware that the injury must prove fatal, the noble

young soldier preserved his fortitude and tranquillity to the last.

Some buildings are in progress which will render the chief's castle somewhat more commodious, the walls being already completed. Garibaldi pays his masons and labourers exactly as he was accustomed to pay his generals, two francs a day, considering, no doubt, that a good day's work of any description confers a right to equal wage!

Though compelled to sleep at Maddalena, I passed almost every morning of my three weeks' visit at Caprera—sometimes working, sometimes shooting with the rest. As for work, we built a wind-mill and a wall, besides lesser strokes of labour. As for shooting, we killed a considerable number of very nice little birds, which differed only in name from the British thrush, but not much other game. Menotti, I observed, passed a good deal of his time in the study of Sir Walter Scott, being at that moment in the heart of *Waverley*, and, in consequence, almost non-effective for "works of labour or of skill." As for our chief himself, he was invisible for by far the greater part of the day, and well he might be. Frightful was the mountain of correspondence that found its way to that apparently undisturbed retirement! In spite of this, however, I enjoyed, during my stay, many a pleasant snatch of conversation with my dear general—many a reminiscence of Sicily and Naples—some prevision of possibly not dissimilar days to come; but on very, very little of such intercourse have I, his private guest, a right to dwell. I may, however, mention that Garibaldi spoke frequently, and in the highest terms,

of the assistance he had received at English hands—instancing especially Dunne and Dowling—the former of whom, landing in Sicily a perfect stranger to the country and language, by his own personal exertions raised and organised that gallant battalion whose subsequent services abler pens than mine have depicted.

Touching the British legion, Garibaldi, from his attachment to their intrepid colonel, spoke with caution. There could be no question that his opinion was, that had that really fine body of men been despatched a few weeks earlier, fairly officered, and placed under judicious and experienced command, they would have rendered services hard to overrate.

Nor did the general fail to acknowledge other gallant strangers—French and Americans—who flocked, not unneeded, to the relief and encouragement of his young Sicilian levies, and rude Calabrese, whose fitful courage was not always equal to the strain. Who that was in Naples, will forget how the faces that crowded the railway-carriages formed a sufficient criterion whether or not any serious work was forthcoming; or how, when the said work was declared, a thin line of English, French, and Americans—rifle or rammer in hand—made itself everywhere visible along the threatened front? Language was of no great moment. I passed two hours one morning with a Calabrese battalion, whose gallant colonel—an American—talked himself absolutely hoarse, and yet uttered but one word, “*Avanti!*” (Forward).

“I am not fond of war,” said Garibaldi, leaning on his hoe at the close of one of those conversations I have

mentioned (the chief had been planting water-melons—a month and a half too early)! “I have witnessed too many of war’s miseries for *that*. Endeavours are being made for a peaceable solution. They may possibly succeed, and none will more sincerely rejoice at such a result than I and my friends.”

Besides innumerable letters, heaps of newspapers, in every language, find their way to Garibaldi—the *Times* having been (hitherto) forwarded under the seal of office of an ex-recorder. Another paper, the *Farmer’s Journal*, arrived one day, addressed to “General Joseph Garibaldi, care of Victor Emmanuel, Naples.”

A day or two after my arrival, the singular-looking woman who had been our fellow-passenger in the *Dante* made her appearance, and requested an audience of the general, who, happening to be at leisure, instantly acquiesced, and conducted her into his study, a ground-floor room, the window of which opened into the garden where we were at work. Garibaldi had not appeared to recognise his visitor. Nevertheless, the conference lasted so long, that, a little uneasy on account of the woman’s strange appearance, and awake to the possibility of some fanatical attempt upon the general’s life, we arranged that one or other of the party should pass the window at frequent intervals, and see that all was right. They were standing in the middle of the room, apparently in deep discourse. At last the woman came out, exhibiting, with seeming triumph, an autograph of the chief’s, and walked away. The object of her visit, if it had any other than curiosity, never transpired.

A little later, I took an opportunity of telling the general of our anxiety, and asking him if he thought it prudent to admit strangers so freely to his presence. He laughed, and answered that he always became conscious in time of the approach of danger.

If—as is happily little likely—any attempt hostile to the hero's safety should necessitate escape, it is satisfactory to know that the heights above his residence afford numerous places of refuge unknown or inaccessible to all but the mountaineers.

"With a few hundred rifles," said Stagnetti one day, as we were shooting, "I could hold these heights against the whole Austrian army."

Profound was the regret with which I at length bade farewell to the rocky isle. I wore attached to my watch-chain a locket with the general's photograph; and wishing to add to it a lock of his hair, preferred my petition accordingly.

He laughed.

"No, no, captain," said he. "If I cut off a lock of hair for each of my soldiers, I should soon be as bald as the rocks on which I live. Besides, at *my* time of life, hair becomes of greater value to the owner." Saying which, the alarmed general beat a hasty retreat.

But under his tuition I had learned to be more persevering in attack. Unable to follow the chief into his fastness, I had recourse to two generous allies. Menotti and the Signora Teresina embraced my cause, and boldly entered the enemy's work. I am ashamed to add (and may the Signora Teresina never be aware of my unworthy mistrust!) that I watched through

the half-open door to be certain that the hair was grown on the proper head.

There was a momentary argument, a faint struggle, a brief consultation. The victor of Milazzo — and how many other fields? — had capitulated, and a lock, a trifle darker than the rest, was cut from a spot where it would scarcely be missed, behind the right ear.

The party accompanied me to the boat, and followed me with cheers and waving hands, the last distinguishable words coming across the water, in the accents, I think, of Stagnetti, bringing down his fowling-piece, as he spoke, to the position of "charge:" "A rivederci, Agostino! VENEZIA!"





AWFUL EXPERIENCE IN THE LIFE OF FILUS KROAST.



AM no relation—I confess it—of Filus Kroast. The extraordinary event in her life it has fallen to my lot to record, shall not betray me into drawing the connection one hairbreadth closer than is warranted by strictest truth. Having said this, I may mention, with some little pride, that her excellent mother presided over the dame's-school at the very same village in which my aunt's second husband passed his childhood!

It will have been already understood that Filus, in spite of the masculine termination of the name, was a lady. Concerning the spelling of *both* names, Filus maintained through life, with her many friends, an animated yet kindly controversy. Those whose education had received the highest polish, openly affirmed that no other combination of characters than such as would produce the words PHILLIS CROWHURST, would fully meet the exigencies of the case. But Filus had her own convictions. Being the weaker party, I range

myself under her banner—"Filus and Freedom (of spelling)!" Moreover, we have the law of England itself on our side, since the very last of the wills and testaments of Filus Kroast—she executed fifty-nine—lies proven, in that very name, at Doctors' Commons, and visible, if not remarkably legible, for one shilling. So, there!

I own to some rashness in the expression "weaker party." From the very first Filus possessed a strong and trusty ally in Martha Drabbit, kitchen-maid in the establishment in which Filus was upper house-maid. Martha entertained an admiration, trenching upon idolatry, for her accomplished friend. In her opinion, Filus *could* not err. As Blondin is said to experience a positive difficulty in losing his balance on the rope which constitutes his natural home, so it would cost Filus an express mental effort to effect any species of mistake.

Poor Martha herself had, in fact, no name. She had been found in a worsted stocking attached to the knocker of the mansion of the most noble the Marquis of Carraway, in Portman Square. That noble peer was on the Continent, and has probably never been apprised, until the present moment, of the implied compliment to his philanthropy.

Miss Drabbit's precocious attempt to connect herself with the aristocracy was not entirely successful: the butler, a stern, disappointed man, handed her to the policeman; the policeman, to the parish authorities; the latter—in due season—to Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles, of Sweet Street, Pleasant Square, S.W., in the capacity I have already mentioned.

Christened "Martha," at the instigation of the beadle, a gentleman of limited imagination, "Drabbit" had been afterwards superadded for two reasons—the first general, because it was ascertained, on inquiry, that the metropolis already contained more than one Martha; the second special, inasmuch as "Drabbit it"—or, more correctly, "Ad rabbit it"—was Martha's favourite interjection.

My acquaintance with Miss Drabbit was inaugurated by this very expression.

"Ad rabbit that ere boy!" said a voice both sharp and sweet, as I was pacing abstractedly along. Looking round, I became aware that Martha Drabbit was washing the door-steps of one of the houses—that that young lady had turned hastily on her knees to gaze angrily after a retreating pot-boy—that she wore blue garters over black stockings, and secured those articles below the knee.

Perish my pen, if in any other age I would have written this! But crinoline has familiarised us with such hitherto undreamed-of wonders, that I record it firmly, openly, without even the semblance of a blush—that Martha wore blue garters, and that one of these, though but for an almost inappreciable moment, I saw.

It was characteristic of Martha's stern fidelity that she should have been so indignant with the boy, inasmuch as her mistress, Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles, was—with everybody else of any consequence—out of town. The grass was growing with unusual luxuriance in Regent Street, and Vice-admiral Sir Kusac Dosey, though upon the very committee of his club, had been

ignominiously expelled from that building by the under-butler—its sole inhabitant.

But Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles was a very remarkable lady, and, absent or present, the terror of her was unceasingly predominant in the household. She was a beautiful little woman, with large dark-gray eyes and a perfectly transparent complexion. She had, further, a soft and silken manner, and purred sweetly when she talked. You longed to pat her. It would have been safer to touch a tiger! Tornadoes of passion lay slumbering beneath that gentle exterior. Once aroused, she gave herself up, as it were, body and soul, to the demon of rage, hardly sensible, for the moment, of the excesses to which it hurried her. By nature, and through neglect of training, she was the incarnation of selfishness. The slightest personal neglect sufficed to awaken the most appalling gusts of passion, and though intercourse with society had necessarily taught her some degree of self-government, among her dependents these paroxysms had full sway.

Perfectly conscious of her failing, she had, early in life, fallen into the fatal error of regarding it as planted ineradicably in her disposition, and believed that the painful force she had sometimes to impose upon her rising passions in general society must be compensated for by indulging them, at other seasons, among those accustomed to submit. Hence, resorting to palliatives, she adopted a line of conduct, both before and after these ebullitions, which she flattered herself might meet the emergency, and, on feeling the approach of the fiend, would become so fearfully sweet

and gentle as to awaken the most lively apprehensions. A little present which, not unfrequently, accompanied this change, became, under the circumstances, as ominous an offering as the bowstring politely handed to an offending pacha.

When engaging her domestics, Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles sweetly and candidly told them what they had to expect.

"I am a passionate, wicked little wretch," she would murmur, in her low, pleasant voice. "Be very sorry for me. It is the bitter in my cup of life. But I must be resigned, so must you" (with one of her bewitching smiles), "and as I do so hate changing my servants, and your terms are so-and-so, I will double them—do you hear?—on condition that you bear with your unfortunate mistress in her occasional trials, and say nothing of them beyond these sad doors."

As no new applicant was ever known to repose the slightest faith in the charming little lady's account of herself, the bargain, it may be supposed, was quickly concluded, and Susan (or Thomas) entered upon her duties with a quiet snigger, convinced that she had got into a good thing.

A week perhaps elapsed, when—"Thu-than," a sweet voice would lisp, from behind the bed-curtains, as the maid entered her lady's room, "I have such a headache! There must be a flower in the room. You did not forget, did you, my good girl, to place those roses on the window-sill? eh, Susan, dear?"

Conscience-stricken at having neglected the behests of so gentle and affectionate a mistress, Susan seized

the offending flowers in one hand, and softly opening the curtains with the other, so as to make her apologies with the better grace, received a stinging slap on the eye and cheek, delivered with the whole force of the little ringed hand!

"You insolent, obstinate minx! You great gaping idiot! take that, and that, and this!" and the infuriated lady, catching up every movable her arm could reach—cup, candlestick, books, &c.—hurled them wildly at Susan's head.

"Do you defy me, you wretch?" she added, suddenly sinking her voice to a whisper more terrible still, and, with every feature of her altered face working with insensate rage, she glided from her bed and caught up the poker.

Susan cast one terrified glance at the little fiend-like figure, and incontinently fled, banging the door, to cover her retreat. Fearful was the hubbub that ensued. Screaming, stamping, tearing and smashing everything that crossed her way, the unhappy lady might be heard exhausting the remnants of her passion upon the senseless objects around, till the room was strewn with ruin.

Below, the servants gathered in a bewildered group, uncertain how to act. The butler himself was pale and mute, and it was not a little that disturbed Mr. Binns. One voice alone, with reassuring calmness, rose above the frightened murmurs—it was that of Filus Kroast.

"Set ye down, and don't do nothin'," was Filus's counsel; and, taking out her housewife, she seated herself, with perfect unconcern, and fell to work upon the toe of an aged sock.

Suddenly the uproar in my lady's chamber ceased. There was a loud thump, as if she had fallen heavily on the floor. The group started. Could the unfortunate lady have laid violent hands upon herself?

Still Filus sat and wrought. After another minute:

"Now, I think," said Filus, "she will be done;" and, calmly rising, as though to examine the progress of a bit of toast, the intrepid girl slipped off her shoes, walked steadily up-stairs, and applied her ear to the keyhole. A low sound of sobbing was alone audible. Filus nodded, over the balusters, her entire satisfaction at the state of things, then quietly opened the door and walked in.

Her mistress was lying stretched on the carpet, her face on the very floor, weeping bitterly, and, in the agony of her remorse, beating her little white feet cruelly against the ground.

Filus cast one glance at her, in which no grain of contempt mingled with its womanly compassion, and then set skilfully to work in restoring order. When this was in some measure effected, and the bits of broken glass and porcelain carefully swept aside, she for the first time drew near her lady, and gently placed a soft cushion under the bruised feet; then, lifting up her head, like that of a sick child, she laid it also on a cool, soft pillow; finally, she stretched a quilted dressing-robe over the recumbent figure, like a pall, gave one sigh, as to fallen greatness, and withdrew.

"Fifty pound a year, with tea and sugar, and my beer, ain't so bad, mind you," remarked Susan that

evening at supper; "but I do wish there warn't no pokers in her room!"

"Missis won't hardly play that game with me," said Thomas, with languid assurance. (Thomas had large, brown, melancholy eyes, and was very proud of them.) "I don't mind a quick word or so, but if she comes the poker-dodge, I shall stop her with my hey."

Thomas had very soon an opportunity of testing the power of that organ. One morning, the bell of his lady's boudoir rang a little more sharply than usual. Thomas hurried up. Mrs. Syles was sitting with her face turned to the window, and spoke to him without changing her position. There was, nevertheless, a slight, almost imperceptible heaving of the beautiful shoulders, and a sort of tremor in her cooing tones, that might have alarmed the initiated.

"Oh Thomas, will you—will you oblige me by telling me, Thomas, at what hour this morning my letters and papers were put into your hands? I am sure you will remember how especially I directed you, my good Thomas, to place them always on the table by—by ten o'clock. Yes, Thomas?"

Thomas recollected, with some compunction, that he had paused in the hall to read a rather lengthened report of the demise, by operation of law (or, as Thomas himself would have briefly phrased it, "hexecution"), of Mr. Michael O'Shaughnessy, for the murder of another Irish gentleman, and that he had probably done so under his mistress's too vigilant eye. Nevertheless, deluded by the sweetness of her voice, Thomas, without thought of fear, at once

allowed that he had stopped in the 'all, to read a few lines that chanced to catch his——

Before he could finish, Mrs. Syles had started from her chair, and confronted him like a demon; her eyes literally blazing with passion.

"You meddling booby! you inquisitive, impertinent hound! how *dare* you presume to open anything intended for me? Out of my sight—leave my house! What—you answer me? Take *that*!"

And therewith, a very handsome and rather weighty annual, whirling through the air, took the direction of Thomas's head. That gentleman promptly ducked, and a small mirror received the *Friendship's Offering*. A *Forget-me-not* following, with better aim, struck Thomas—so fate decreed—on the very eye with which he had proposed to check his mistress's ungoverned rage.

Having now lost every remnant of self-command, she would have proceeded to further violence, but by this time Thomas had rallied his astonished senses, and saw that he had but two alternatives—to seize and restrain the little fury by superior force, or, like Susan, to turn and flee. Thomas adopted the latter course, and, reaching his pantry in safety, devoted himself to the care of his more than ever melancholy eye till dinner-time.

He did leave the house that evening, but it was with a five-pound note in his damask-pocket, and permission to spend a fortnight with his friends.

These are but specimens, taken at hazard, from scenes of frequent occurrence in the household of Mrs. Syles, their trivial origin proving how slightly

removed from actual aberration of intellect was the passion thus demonstrated.

Without the walls the secret was kept with unwonted fidelity. Double wages and a most liberal table were an ample compensation for an occasional fright and a few bruises; and a certain dark tradition, concerning a cook's fractured skull, though far from being forgotten, was, by universal consent, regarded as a fiction. One thing only was certain, that Mrs. Smyles never passed the threshold of the kitchen, and that the sight or mention of a rolling-pin would cause her to quiver from head to foot as with pain.

At the time the circumstances I am to relate occurred, Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles, as has been mentioned, was out of town; of all her establishment, only two remained in charge of the mansion—namely; Filus Kroast and Martha Drabbit.

Tea-time—five o'clock—was at hand, but Miss Kroast, not waiting for the clock to strike, summoned her colleague to the table, declaring that she felt very low, and that a good cup would set her up again.

Martha unhesitatingly signified that she herself was a trifle beneath her usual elevation, and that the remedy aforesaid invariably set *her* upon her legs again with more vigour than ever.

On this occasion, Filus's depression did not yield to the accustomed panacea.

"That my sperrets was so low, I don't remember when the time was," she remarked. Filus had a habit of reversing her sentences, which gave them an obscure and clever sound.

Martha merely replied with a dissyllabic grunt

which might be variously rendered: "Dear me!" "No, no!" "Nonsense!" "Poor thing!" &c., at pleasure.

"Something," I says to myself, when I rose up this morning, "is going to happen, Phillis, this day."

Martha thought that sufficient *might* actually have occurred, in the general universe, since five in the morning, to realize that presentiment; but her friend's solemn tone indicating a personal application, and her own sole idea of a catastrophe being fire, she contented herself with observing incidentally that the chimneys had one and all been swep' on Toos-day.

"And happen it will," continued Filus, "afore bed-time."

Miss Drabbit, without actually quoting the Ides of March and Julius Cæsar, assented, in general terms, to the fact that the season of danger was not yet completely past; adding, moreover, a suggestion which, had it occurred to the illustrious Roman, might have changed the destinies of a world—namely, that by retiring to bed immediately after the present meal, they should at once terminate the day, and avert the omen.

But Filus, though nervous to the last degree, scouted such pusillanimity; she would not retire a moment before the usual hour, come what might.

"Into my mouth my heart if even the very postman with a letter came would jump," said Filus, "and"—

RAT-TAT!

"Aggravating feller! He did that o' purpose, now," ejaculated Filus faintly.

Martha hurried up, and returned with the letter, which wore a crumpled, foreign aspect.

"From missis," pronounced Filus.

It was, and thus it ran :—

"CHÂTEAU DE PRANGINS, NYON.

"PHILLIS AND MARTHA—Very soon after this reaches you, an individual will come to the house, and possibly remain there for several days. Not to puzzle you with many directions, I wish you to understand, my good girls, that you are to treat him, in all respects, *exactly as myself*. Should his dress or appearance seem strange, you will, of course, take no notice, nor will you evince the least surprise at *anything* he may choose to do. I shall explain to you hereafter. At present, I have only to warn you, my steady and faithful Phillis and Martha, that I expect these my orders to be obeyed to the very letter.—

Affectionately,

SERENA LOVELEIGH SMYLES."

"Wot's an Individual?" asked Miss Drabbit, timidly breaking the pause that followed; for Filus was not a fluent reader, and being, moreover, a little perplexed with her mistress's spelling, was somewhat exhausted with the effort.

Miss Kroast affected to ignore her friend's question, but the latter pressing it—

"Why, a He," said Filus cautiously. "Didn't you hear, stupid? Missis says we are to treat *him* 'percisely as herself.'"

"It must be a very particular *he*," said Martha, only

half-satisfied, "for missis to make him master. S'pose you'll put Individual in the blue room?"

"S'pose you know nothing about it," replied Filus sharply. "*Precisely like myself* is words that has but one meaning, and that is: 'Put him in my room; give him my keys; take your orders from him; turn the house out o' winder if he ses the word; and if he breaks your 'eds, why, the less you speaks of it the better.'"

Martha felt that the one meaning was at least comprehensive; but her only audible comment was "Drabbit it! I wish he wan't a-coming!"—a sentiment which harmonized so completely with Filus's own, that she could not forbear rebuking its premature expression.

"Drabbit! Drabbit! you forget yourself. (Martha hung her head.) "No more of this, if you please. He is missis's friend. P'r'aps some furrin gentleman as doesn't want his name mentioned—they doesn't sometimes. Who knows it ain't Lewis Napoleon himself? Missis knew him in England. When does missis say he's——'very soon after this reaches'—— That's as good as saying 'to-morrow.'"

"*Rat—tat—TAT!*"

Three slow knocks, the last delivered with great force, interrupted the conference.

"It's the Individual!" cried Martha.

"S'pose it is," said Filus. "Run up, child, and open the door. Say I'm coming."

Martha lingered, as if afraid, until the knock was repeated, when, in obedience to a hasty gesture from her friend, she went upstairs. The bolts and chains

seemed to take a long time to undo; at length, however, the door was heard to open, then instantly re-close, and Martha reappeared, breathless.

"'Twarn't nobody!

"Don't tell *me!*" retorted Filus indignantly. "What do you call that?" as for the third time, the solemn summons re-echoed through the mansion.

"I'll tell you what I call it," said Martha, bursting out crying—"a WARNING."

"You'd very likely find it so, if mistress knew what a gaby you are making of yourself," was the strong-minded reply. "Go directly, and let him in."

"I dursn't," said Martha, for the first time in her life disobedient to her oracle. "There ain't no Lewis Napoleon, nor nothing else at the door!"

Filus wasted no more words, but, taking a candle—for it was now getting dusk—with the air of a Giovanni going to admit his petrified supper-guest, marched upstairs.

The chain was heard to fall, the door to open; then came a smothered shriek—a sort of scuffle; next, the candlestick reappeared, hopping down-stairs alone, as though to announce the discomfiture of its mistress, who immediately followed, having apparently rolled or slidden down half the distance, and landed in the kitchen, with another shriek, to which Martha heartily responded.

"Shut your eyes! Shut your eyes! See what's a-follerin' me!" gasped Filus.

Finding these directions incompatible, Martha obeyed the latter, and beheld an enormous black ball, about two feet in diameter, come bouncing into the

room. Brought up with a jerk by the leg of the dresser, the ball opened, became elongated, stood on one end, and presented the appearance of an almost impossible human being, something under three feet high. The head being of the size of full-grown manhood, looked, of course, preposterously large, and owing to the face being remarkably long and thin, occupied a good third of the creature's altitude. The countenance itself had nothing repulsive in its expression, being grave and melancholy, finished, moreover, with a pointed beard; and the attire of the strange little personage belonging also to a former age, he might altogether have suggested the idea of the executioner of Charles I. having somehow missed his stroke, and divided his illustrious victim about the hips.

"It's a himp! Keep off—keep off!" shrieked Martha, as the dwarf made a movement to approach.

"I'll himp you both," returned the latter, his pensive smile changing to a ferocious grin, and a strange green lustre appearing in his eyes, like those of a cat in the dark. "Stop your confounded noise, and behave like rational beings. You've got the letter!"

"Please, sir, are you an Individual?" asked Filus timidly.

"Understand distinctly that I am," replied the dwarf, recovering his suavity. "Don't put me out, and you'll find me a very agreeable one. Now, observe—this is my sole caution—Don't Put Me Out. Perhaps you did not expect me quite so soon?"

"Well, sir, we didn't," said Filus, beginning to recover her self-possession. "You see, mistress didn't mention your name, and we don't kn"—

"Did she tell you to *ask* it?" said the dwarf sharply. "Now, don't put me out. However, *I* don't mind your knowing; and, indeed, it would be necessary, as certain friends—I allude chiefly to the Turkish Ambassador, Lord Viscount Seringapatam, and Sir Charles Opossum—will probably wait upon me early to-morrow. I am, on all ordinary occasions, accosted as the Venomous Fly; in the abandonment of private friendship, shortly 'Legs,' because, in that particular, nature has been short with *me*. Seringy and Opossum will most likely ask for me by the latter name; His Excellency the Effendi Hassan Mesrour Mahound, by the former. Attend me to my bedroom. I sup there."

With a trembling hand, and feeling very much as if she were walking in a dream, Filus lit a silver lamp, and led the way to the luxurious chamber of the mistress of the house. Those soft yielding carpets, gilded mirrors, costly cabinets, that couch of down on which a fly's spongy foot would leave a hollow, those delicate rose-tinted curtains, were such, in good truth, the destined surroundings of the hideous little burlesque of humanity that came waddling after her into the rich apartment, as coolly as if he were entering an inn garret? Was nothing less deemed fit accommodation for the Venomous Fly?

Filus almost screamed, as with one bound he leaped upon the bed, and rolling himself up in the rich coverlet, glared at her as if it were nothing but a mask stuck upright on the couch.

"What would you like for s-supper, sir?" stammered Filus.

"Eggs, brandy, and the cat," was the reply. "Now, don't put me out." And the green eyes reappeared.

"He wants the *cat* to eat," said Filus, staggering into the kitchen, pale as ashes. "Here, Tittums! Tittums!"

Martha could bear no more; she caught her bonnet from a peg, and made a rush towards the door.

"For to be the Queen upon her throne, I wouldn't stay in this house another minnit!"

"Run away; leave me—do," said Filus, steadily.

Sarcasm is stronger than reproach; friendship is stronger than ambition. Not to be tempted by the offer of a realm, Martha paused at the thought of abandoning her friend. The latter saw her hesitation.

"Didn't missis tell us we wasn't to be astonished at *nothin'*?" she calmly inquired. "Showin' she knowed as the Individual's ways was pecoolier. 'Cept that, when he's angry, his eyes turns green, I don't see nothin' to be frightened at," continued the heroic Filus, gaining confidence with every word. "Providentially, the cat ain't at home." And Filus turned her back on the unconscious Tittums, curled up in the shadow of the clock.

As she spoke, a shrill, peculiar cry, compounded of a mew and a whistle, sounded from above; in a second the cat shook off her slumbers, darted, in two bounds, across the room, and vanished, like a flash of gray light, up the staircase.

"As I'm a living sinner!" said Martha, aghast, "*she knows him!*"

This new phenomenon, however, did not affect Martha's determination to remain with her friend,

happen what might. Flinging aside her bonnet, she returned to her allegiance.

One of the best silver supper-trays being laid out in as attractive a form as the simplicity of the guest's order permitted, the two proceeded upstairs, Miss Drabbit bearing the light, which the other, in her bewilderment, had brought away. Any anxiety on behalf of Tittums was at once dispelled by the appearance of *four* green eyes exactly on a level. The cat was squatting on the pillow, close to the dwarf's ear, into which she seemed every now and then to pour some confidential communication, looking up searchingly at Filus as she entered, with a curious imitation of the dwarf's manner.

"Ha! Supper, Tittums!" exclaimed the latter, kicking off the coverlet, and sitting up, though the change of attitude made little perceptible difference.

The tray being placed on the bed, the cat at once skipped over and placed herself at the other end, never once removing her green eyes from her new acquaintance, but following his every movement with the most affectionate relish.

He was evidently out of humour, and, far from being gratified at the elegant manner in which his frugal supper had been served, grumbled incessantly, flinging the articles about, demanding why he was not served with plate, &c., and generally evincing the most lordly contempt for the luxuries with which he saw himself surrounded.

"And now," said the dwarf, kicking off the tray without further ceremony, "now for my riot. Lights there!"

Filus lit a large table-lamp and two candles, but this illumination by no means contented the irascible little monster, who continued to howl, "More lights! More!" until all the available candlesticks in the house had been produced, and the room was in a perfect blaze. Then, twisting the delicate curtains into a sort of rope, and scrambling up, in a second, to the canopy of the bed, the dwarf commenced a series of gambols and gyrations that almost defy description. Dancing, leaping, turning somersaults, swinging by his imperceptible legs from apparently impossible places, swarming up the angles of the wall, and actually buzzing along the gilt cornice with strange insect noises, The Venomous Fly completely vindicated his title to the name. As for Tittums, after making one or two bold but futile efforts to follow her friend up the wall, she owned herself fairly distanced, and took her place, with a mortified air, among the audience.

During this performance, the two women had sat with open eyes and mouths, too much bewildered even to exchange a word. It pleased the Fly, however, to alight, in the course of one of his aërial trips, upon the top of a wardrobe; opening the door with one leg, and peering over, the Fly affected to be immensely struck with what he saw there, and forthwith disappeared, head first, into a sea of silk and muslin, closing the door behind him.

At this horrible sight, Filus could contain herself no longer.

"Oh, my 'Evins! Missis's lovely gownds!" she shrieked, starting from her chair.

"Drabbit the himp!" exclaimed Martha, doing the same.

Before either could reach the wardrobe, the door reopened, and revealed the Fly completely attired in one of Mrs. Smyles's most costly dresses, wanting nothing but a befitting head-dress to be in trim for the court-ball for which that identical dress had been intended.

"Put me out, *now*, and take the consequences," hissed the dwarf, turning on the green light, and grinning with an expression so fiendish that the women recoiled. "Where's my di'monds? Here's the Duchess o' Dishwater waitin' at the door since half-past seven, and sends up her footman to swear she won't stand it any longer? Where's my jewel-box?"

"Please, sir, missis always sends her di'monds to the banking-house," said Filus.

"Tell her Grace she needn't wait," rejoined the Venomous Fly; and, in spite of the encumbrance of the dress, he threw a somersault from the wardrobe and alighted in the middle of the floor. "Turn off the lights; I'm going to bed. Wake me in the morning, when your mistress sends my luggage;" and just as he was, he jumped upon the bed, and pretended to fall instantly asleep. . . .

"I'm all in a twirl," said Filus, as (the Ides of March at length concluded) the two lay down on their respective couches. "But I've made up my mind to one thing—he shan't riot no more in missis's room without the pelisse a-looking on. "Luggage!" I don't believe he've got no luggage. Hapes don't carry much of that sort o' thing."

"Nor yet himps," put in Martha, faithful to her diabolical theory.

Filus admitted that the provision made in this respect by such personages was probably slender; then, finding her companion too fatigued for further converse, quickly followed her into the land of dreams.

Much to their surprise, early on the following morning, a goods-van deposited at the house three travelling-chests of enormous weight, carefully locked, and secured with iron hasps. Direction cards, in the lady's own hand, commended them to the "Care of Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles, 14, Sweet Street, Pleasant Square, S.W.," the cards made use of proving to be visiting-tickets of her own. A parchment label, attached to each trunk, bore, in bolder characters, yet still unmistakably those of Mrs. Smyles—"THE VENOMOUS FLY."

The trunks having been conveyed, not without much difficulty, into an inner room, the two sat down and looked at each other.

"Hem!" remarked Filus generally.

"Eh?" said Martha inquiringly.

"Ah!" (with a sigh).

"Poor thing!"

"You dursn't think," began Filus, boldly feeling the way.

"I thinks what I thinks," replied Miss Drabbit, not sullenly, but, as it were, reluctantly admitting a painful fact.

Filus became impatient.

"S'long as I've known you, and so kind as I've

seen to you, Martha Drabbit, and you afeard to speak out?"

Martha refused the trap, and politely turned the enemy's flank.

"What's the use? You're always guessin' one's thoughts, Filus. Now!"

Filus yielded with a smile.

"Well, well, child, you're right for once. There's only one way of accounting for all this." She put her mouth to Martha's ear—"Missis is cracked."

A long consultation followed upon the questions arising from this new theory, resulting in a twofold resolution—namely to let things generally take their course, at least for another day, and to consult—in an unofficial manner—"P 126," with whom Martha boasted a nodding acquaintance, and who might be seen, at that very moment, prosecuting his listless stroll.

"P 126" readily responded to Martha's signal, and listened with that entire absence of astonishment which characterizes the force, to Filus's relation of what had occurred. He didn't see no call for thinking Mrs. Smyles was cracked. He knowed a lady which kept a baboon, what used to play up all manner o' shines among the moveables. *She* wan't cracked, though some cups was! Now, here it lays (considered P 126). So long as this dwarft doesn't actiwallly prig nothing, the hands of the pilice is tied. And how *can* he prig? All that's not hisn's hern; and, 'cording to her orders, all that's hern's hisn! Why, he *can't* prig (said P 126, with honest warmth); at least, there's never a beak as *I* knows on what would take the charge. *That's* how it lays.

Unsatisfactory as was the attitude, Filus allowed it to remain there, and about noon the following day the dwarf rang the bell, and demanded his luggage.

Upon Filus's report of its weight, however, the Fly was induced to descend (which he did by buzzing down the balusters without touching the stairs) and make a selection. He chose the heaviest of the three trunks, which was, with infinite labour and ingenuity, transported to his chamber. Once there, the dwarf produced from his pocket the key, and Filus, having with the aid of hammer and chisel detached the metal fastenings, was dismissed with her companion from the room.

For nearly an hour, no sound from above reached their ears. At the end of that time, Filus, crossing the hall, thought she heard a shriek of laughter. She stopped. It was repeated. Curiosity overcoming every other consideration, she crept softly upstairs, and applying her eye to the key-hole, saw the dwarf standing upon his head in the middle of the room, and ever and anon indulging in peals of triumphant laughter. Near him stood one of the dressing-tables, swept of its usual contents, but laden with rows of curious substances, grotesque and various in form, but all of one hue.

"My 'Evins !' thought Filus. "Whatever can you want of all that yellor soap ?"

At the instant, a thundering knock resounded on the house-door. She saw the dwarf leap to his feet ; then, waiting just long enough to admit of the possibility of her having run upstairs, Filus tapped at the door, and inquired whether, in the event of the

visitor proving to be Sir Charles Opossum, that gentleman should be admitted.

"At your peril!" screamed the dwarf. "Say I'm out—say everybody's out! Run! Fly!"

There was something in his voice so expressive of genuine consternation, that Filus could not forbear another peep. His face was perfectly livid. He was replacing his yellow soap in the box with such anxious haste, that Filus completed her observations with perfect safety. The knock, however, was repeated, and she flew down stairs.

"Holloa, I say, young woman! you haven't fatigued yourself, I hope?" was the frank address of a man about eight-and-twenty, who had just dismissed a cab, and supported a small but weighty valise in his hands. He had handsome features, much embrowned; his black hair hung in corkscrew ringlets almost to his shoulders, and he wore heavy gold earrings. As for his dress, it partook so impartially of two characters, that he might be described either as a maritime farmer or an agricultural seaman, according to fancy. "You've got the letter?" he continued, coolly walking before her into the dining-room.

"The l-l-l——"

"Etter," said the visitor, showing his white teeth—"my sister's l-l-letter. And the b-b-boxes. Three boxes. How! holloa! What's the game now? Is the girl going to faint?"

He might well ask; for, in that terrible moment, had flashed upon Filus's mind the probability, nay, almost absolute certainty, that the Venomous Fly was an impostor! Visions of the desecrated chamber,

the damaged ornaments, the torn dresses, floated across her bewildered fancy. She could hear the treacherous insect himself, above, still busy with his soap. *His* soap? The soap of the man who stood there before her eyes, sternly demanding, again and again, if his boxes were safe!

But Filus Kroast was no common woman. In a second it occurred to her that the dwarf could be suppressed, the boxes re-secured, the room re-arranged; all might yet remain a secret, saving only the destruction of one or two articles of value, for the announcement of which a favourable opportunity might be chosen. This resolved, Filus hastily assured him that all was well; that, in a few minutes, rooms would be ready for his reception, &c. She offered to take his valise; but, small as it was, such was its weight, that the stranger, with a smile, tendered his assistance.

"You seemed a little upset at my outlandish rig," he added, good-humouredly. "Fresh from the diggings, that's all. My name's Jack Hylton, your dear mistress's only brother. See the likeness *now*, eh? Landed at Liverpool a few days ago from the splendid clipper, *Venomous Fly*, sent on my traps with the direction Serena had written for me, and here I am. Room ready?"

Begging him to remain a few minutes in the parlour, Filus swept up the stairs, and burst, like an avenging angel, into the dwarf's room. He had not quite concluded his packing, and turned on her his green eyes with a look of fury that, at a less desperate moment, might have kept Filus at bay. As it was, she

rushed right upon the little monster, and twisting her hands in his thick black hair, shook his Charles I. head till it looked like a sign of that monarch quivering in a storm.

"You aggravatin' little devil!" cried Filus, shaking with all her might. "*You* missis's visitor? See what you've been and done! Me and Martha's ruined, and all for your games! Here's the gentleman belonging to them soap-boxes, and he wants 'em this instant-minnit."

With a violent wrestle, the dwarf shook himself free.

"Soap-boxes!" he exclaimed. "It's *gold*!"

"It's never gold!" echoed Filus, faintly. "We shall all be hanged. Hark!" (The parlour bell rang violently.) "You come along with me. Quick, quick, or I'll call a perlice myself. If we can only get you out."

The Venomous Fly seemed to admit the wisdom of the counsel. He cast one long wistful glance at the precious "soap," and followed Filus like a lamb. They reached the hall in safety.

"Now," said Filus, impressively, "whatever wild-beast-and-monkey show you 'skept from, it's better for you than them public streets, after *this*. Get back as fast as you can, and tell them, with my compliments, to give you a hidin'."

Whether the Fly would have implicitly followed these directions, will never, perhaps, be known, for at this moment Hylton's hasty step was heard on the hall floor. Filus had just time to push the dwarf into the cloak-room, in which stood Hylton's remaining

boxes, and a large empty trunk of her mistress's. Valise in hand, Hylton approached them.

"Into that big box! Quick!" whispered Filus, in an agony. "Put something between. It shuts with a spring. You'll be stiff——"

"Holloa! about these rooms," began the visitor.

Filus saw that the dwarf was hidden.

"In a moment, sir," she answered, and pulling-to the door behind her, dashed up stairs.

The door, however, had not closed, and Hylton catching a glimpse of his own boxes among the rest, heaved the weighty valise upon the chest that stood nearest, and, locking the door, pocketed the key. As he did so, he fancied, as he afterwards related, that he heard a faint, plaintive cry; but, uncertain from whence the feeble sound proceeded, turned at once away.

Assisted by her trusty friend, Filus quickly succeeded in restoring the box of gold to its original state of (false) security, and removed it to the room intended for Mr. Hylton. The question now was how to account for the possession of the key, when the consultation was cut short by the appearance (guided by their voices) of the impatient gentleman himself, key in hand.

"The portmantle, sir?" asked Filus. "Shall I?——"

"Ah, stay, I'll go myself," replied Hylton; and, hastening down stairs, returned with it on his shoulder.

Oppressed with an indefinable anxiety, Filus had followed him down, and no sooner was his back

turned than she crept into the cloak-room. It was always dark, and now, with its great sarcophagi of boxes, looked more than ever vault-like.

"Dwarft!" (Her voice sounded quite hollow.)

There was no reply.

"Speak, you aggrav—— Ho! my 'Evins!" and Filus staggered forward in horror. *The chest was closed!* The spring, in spite of the introduction of a portion of the unfortunate sleeve, must have yielded under the sudden weight of the valise flung upon it an hour before.

With trembling fingers, like those of a repentant murderess, Filus sought the fatal spring, touched it, leaned heavily forward, saw the horrible confirmation of her fears, and again dropping the heavy lid and closing the spring, fell back in a dead swoon. In falling, she struck her head against the corner of one of Hylton's heavy boxes, and hence, perhaps, her long insensibility, for nearly two hours more had elapsed, when Martha, seeking in some anxiety her friend, discovered her in the condition mentioned.

It seemed fated that nothing should save the ill-starred little monster, for no sooner was poor Filus restored to consciousness, than the horror of her mind induced another period of syncope, and this was succeeded by an attack of fever and delirium, which lasted several days, during which, by Mr. Hylton's orders, every possible care was lavished on the sufferer. In spite, however, of the patient's incoherent ravings, none of the watchers obtained the slightest clue to what had in reality occurred.

It was on the fifth day of Filus's illness, and after

it had taken a favourable turn, that Mrs. Loveleigh Smyles, who had hastened her return to meet her brother, reached home, and found all, except poor Filus, pretty much as she had left it. She was full of gentle sympathy, and insisted on sitting nearly an hour at the bedside of her sick servant, whose anxious heart and still bewildered brain could hardly realise her presence. Oddly enough, one of the topics with which the kind lady sought to amuse the invalid was a visit she had received in Switzerland from a travelling dwarf, who tumbled and conjured, to the great amusement of the household, for an entire day, making himself completely at home; so much so, indeed, as to lay himself open to the imputation of having finally marched off with more than belonged to him. Poor Filus turned upon her side with a groan. She had not the strength to speak, had she wished it; but she was conscious of a miserable feeling that to-morrow, if not to-night, must reveal all.

It was nearly noon on the morrow—Mr. Hylton having gone out—when Thomas of the “heye,” with some trepidation, introduced to his mistress a gentleman who had politely, yet persistently, refused to intrust Thomas with his name. There was a certain something in his quiet demeanour which rose superior to conventional rules, as he silently placed on the lady’s work-table a neat visiting-card, inscribed, “Mr. Adolphus Winnington (detective), Great Scotland Yard.”

The word thus modestly placed in a parenthesis, as if it were of no particular significance, alone caught Mrs. Smyles’s eye. She started slightly, but before

she could open her lips, Mr. Adolphus Winnington opened *his*.

In apology for his intrusion, he would hasten to say that its sole object was the removal of some slight—almost ridiculously slight—misgivings which had been excited in magisterial minds by the receipt of a very singular communication, emanating, it was imagined, from some lunatic, yet one whose mental incapacity it was desirable to place beyond all future cavil. The letter was signed—Mrs. Syles would laugh—“Rolling-pin,” and related to a supposed—ha, ha—*murder*!

Mrs. Syles did not laugh, but, on the contrary, turned so deadly white, that the officer, thinking she was about to swoon, made a step forward to support her. She rallied, however, and, grasping the table, looked her visitor full in the face.

With just a shade less of respect and ease of manner, the latter continued—

Could Mrs. Syles remember having seen or heard anything lately of a certain deformed person—a sort of travelling mountebank—a?—

Dwarf? Assuredly. He performed, not long since, at the Château de Prangins, Nyon, which Mrs. Syles had tenanted.

Exactly. And had since performed in Sweet Street? At that house?

Most certainly not.

Mr. Adolphus Winnington consulted a memorandum, and read with some gravity: “‘Venomous Fly,’ otherwise ‘Legs,’ traced from Nyon to Maçon—thence to Dijon—thence to Paris—thence to Dunkirk

—thence to the ‘Showman’s Arms,’ Puppet Lane, London—thence to 14, Sweet Street, Pleasant Square—*trace lost.*”

“Impossible, sir!” said the lady, rising indignantly. “My servants would never have dared. But I will go and question them.”

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Winnington, his manner becoming, by almost imperceptible degrees, more distant and official; “that is precisely what I cannot allow. Let me explain myself a little further. We have been informed, madam—I know not how truly—that you have been in the habit of exercising a more than usually energetic influence over those in your domestic employ, extending even—pardon me if in error—to personal violence. I see you are agitated.”

“If,” replied Mrs. Smyles, controlling herself by a strong effort—“if an infirmity of temper has at any time given colour to such an imputation, what, may I ask, has that to do with the subject of your visit?”

“To speak with entire frankness,” replied the officer, “two things: first, that your servants will be better examined by another questioner than their mistress; secondly, that the infirmity you have mentioned may possibly—I say *possibly*, but our duty *compels* us to weigh such contingencies—have had some remote connection with the sudden disappearance we have been discussing.”

“Sir!” exclaimed the lady, her eyes flashing scorn and fury. “Do you mean to accuse me of *murder*?”

"That," replied Mr. Adolphus Winnington, with perfect coolness, "is the precise expression selected by our correspondent 'Rolling-pin,' and which appeared to magisterial minds sufficiently emphatic to warrant my present intrusion. He or *she* (for a gentleman attached to our office for the especial purpose of studying autographs pronounces it to be the writing of a female cook with lightish hair) actually indicates the spot where the body may be found."

"Body, sir!" shrieked Mrs. Smyles. "I——
Hark!"

There was a sort of scuffling noise without, accompanied by earnest voices and a feeble hysteric scream; then the door burst open, and Filus Kroast, looking like her own spectre—pale, disordered, half-dressed—staggered in, supported by the faithful Martha.

"I want to confess! I want to confess!" cried the poor woman, sinking on her knees.

"Drabbit the himp, *do*," was Martha's advice.

And with many sighs and tears, Filus faltered out the whole history of the wretched dwarf's appearance, his accident, and death. It was clear that the ill-fated creature had by some means possessed himself of the contents of the letter addressed to the servants by Mrs. Smyles, its mysterious expressions having suggested to him the idea of personating the individual therein referred to. He had likewise stolen the key of the treasure-boxes, and, outstripping Mr. Hylton, arrived, as we have seen, in Sweet Street as the expected guest. How the idea of some catastrophe having occurred could have been imparted to

the police authorities was known to the latter alone. It was probably the result of a consultation between the treacherous P 126 and the mysterious "Rolling-pin," an old acquaintance of that gentleman's, once cook to Mrs. Smyles, but who had quitted that lady's service on account of a rather severe accident to her head in tripping over the cat.

These latter explanations found, of course, no place in Filus's confession, that young lady confining herself to the sufficiently startling facts that had succeeded the dwarf's arrival.

Even the tranquil face of Mr. Winnington showed some disturbance, as he prepared to lead the way towards the fatal room. Mrs. Smyles, overcome with grief and horror, nevertheless would not be left behind. She took the officer's proffered arm, and the party proceeded to the spot.

No sooner was the door opened than the sickening intimation of animal decay made itself strongly perceptible. There was no need to point out that dark coffin-like box, from whose close-clenched lips still depended, like the corner of an escutcheon, a portion of the dwarf's embroidered sleeve.

Mrs. Smyles withdrew her arm and leaned heavily against the wall. The two maids crouched on the floor in the entry.

With some little difficulty, Winnington discovered the fatal spring, pressed it, and flung back the lid. Recoiling for a moment before the odour which diffused itself through the vault-like room, he forced himself to a closer examination. He utters a kind of gasping sob; he tears out the dwarf's coat, and flings

it on the ground. He drags the box a little forward :
" behold your murdered victim ! "

At the bottom of the chest, arms and legs extended, as in the agonies of a violent and painful death, the yellow-green eyes, lustreless indeed, but wide and staring still—lay THE CAT !

Little remains to be told. A small window at the back had evidently supplied the murderer with the means of exit, leaving the body of the too confiding Tittums in token of his disappointed malice.

Poor Filus never entirely recovered the anguish of those days of trial ; she survived it, indeed, for some years, the favourite attendant of her mistress, from whose lips a harsh word was never again known to issue.

As touching the mischievous author of these doings, the police pledged their professional honour that he should be in custody within four-and-twenty hours. That honour was forfeited. After a lapse of ten days, a Liverpool paper calmly announced the departure, under highly favourable circumstances as regards wind and weather, of the renowned clipper *Greased Lightning*, Captain Knever Kaught ; adding that, on the very point of sailing, a most welcome and interesting addition to the passenger-list was made, in the person of the celebrated dwarf, Signor Torriano Tomblero, otherwise " The Venomous Fly," bound—among many individuals of more developed growth—for the Melbourne diggings.

Mr. Winnington has not since been seen to smile.



